

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07602349 2

BALDOON.

BALDOON

BY

LE ROY HOOKER,

AUTHOR OF

"ENOCH THE PHILISTINE."



CHICAGO AND NEW YORK:
RAND, MCNALLY & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS.
MDCCCXCIX.

THE PROPERTY OF THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY

105092B

Copyright, 1899, by Rand, McNally & Co.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Forks	9
II.	"My Daughter Jane"	22
III.	Our Village Satirist	54
IV.	Old George's Deterioration	74
V.	A Case of Base Deception	94
VI.	Mystery at Baldoon House	118
VII.	The Conspiracy Against Prof. Grisdale	148
VIII.	Tragedy at Baldoon	168
IX.	Guilty or Not Guilty?	199
X.	Math and Aftermath	247

FOREWORD.

"I think that the handsomest infant I ever saw! Most babies at this age look deformed about the head, but this one doesn't! And such lovely dimples in its features!"

So discoursed to me a happy young father over the cradle of his first-born child,—a living mite, with the blackest of black hair, a very red face of no particular shape as yet, and not a dimple in it. By the way, the site of the old "Baldoon House" was little more than a mile distant from the spot where the above remarks were made.

The story of "Baldoon" is my precious child, but I shall not speak of it as did that father of *his* offspring — whatever I may think.

The chief object of this preliminary chat with the reader is to make the honest con-

fession that whatever in this book most effectively expresses the humor, pathos, and strong passion of human life is mine only as I have had eyes to see and ears to hear that which was being done and suffered and enjoyed and said round about me.

I knew the man, by another name, who, in the zealous effort to marry off his daughters, said: "Bless my soul, boy! Ef any young man comes to see my daughter Jane I'll put him an' his hoss in the stable an' give him plenty hay an' oats to eat!"

He was a real man who said to the ox-teamster, in my hearing, "Yer cattle will pull jest es well fer 'teapot' es fer cuss-words, ef ye only lay on the gad after sayin' it!"

The man called Bill Wilson is not a creature of the imagination, but a real and well known character who confessed to fighting, drunkenness, lying and stealing, but scorned to swear, and accounted for his peculiarity by saying: "Ef I should swear I shouldn't hurt the other chap by it, an' I should hurt

myself; anyhow, George, I c'nsider thet it's beneath a man of my standin' in sussiety to swear!"

The rude chivalry of Andy Harris, whose wife had been attacked by the gossip of a neighbor-woman with the "muckle De'il" in her tongue, was that of a real man. Meeting Frank Somers, the unfortunate husband of the gossip, he put the matter in knightly form: "Frank, Mary Jane is a woman, an' can't be teched; but somebody's got to be hurt fer Mary Jane, an' you're him!"

Ten thousand times the human heart has felt but suppressed that which was voiced by strong-hearted Mary McGarriger — her husband lying dead in the house and her ears vexed with ill-timed religious consolations—"Whaur wes the Ahlmighty last nicht, when that puir auld mon, that never did hairm tae ony body, wes bein' murdered?"

To my knowledge it came to pass that the same blessed old lady repudiated Jock

Richardson as an "elder and a pillar o' the kirk" because he had lately been too "light o' heels" at a dance. "A pellar o' the kirk, said ye, Mrs. Gawley? He'll be a fallen pellar, an' no muckle better than a caterpellar!" And when Mrs. Gawley quoted the example of King David in justification of Jock Richardson, the sturdy daughter of the Covenanters made answer: "Weel-aweel, woman; but King David didna dance before Betty McDonald!"

Enough. If the reader shall experience as much pleasure in perusing as I have done in writing "Baldoon" the satisfaction will be mutual, and as nearly complete as is possible in this imperfect world.

THE AUTHOR.

BALDOON.

CHAPTER I.

THE FORKS.

"The Forks" was a small village that grew up at the point where, by a kind of aquatic matrimony, the waters of Sydenham Rivere, hitherto divided, are made one water. This happy confluence of the two branches of the river which wander thither from the east and the north is effected in the southwestern corner of Lambton County, in the Canadian province of Ontario.

The little town was created by the lumbering industry that found ample and remunerative scope among the primitive great oaks, black walnuts, whitewoods, and sycamores which abounded on the more elevated lands to the east and the north.

For the most part the houses at The Forks were the least expensive and therefore the plainest the carpenter could build. The prevailing color was the dull gray of unpainted wood which has been long exposed to the weather.

There were some pleasant exceptions, however, to the general unattractiveness. Doctor Martin's house and that of the wealthy Widow Cramer were adorned with white weather-boards, green shutters, fan-lights over the front doors, fancy moldings in the finish of casings and cornices, and with spacious porches supported by stately pillars which were fluted and crowned with richly carved Corinthian capitals. These dwellings, standing side by side, constituted the aristocratic quarter of our village. The dizziest summit of social distinction was to be on visiting terms with the Cramers and the Martins. Every young man among us held that the Cramer home, with Debby in it, was not many removes from the original innocence and beauty of Eden. It would ill

become me now to censure the young men for so esteeming it; for I was one of them.

Many years have passed since The Forks, being puffed up with the pride of life, took unto itself a more pretentious title. I choose to write of it, however, under the old name we used in the long ago, when it was new, and I was young, and Debby Cramer was in the June of her marvelous beauty.

Moreover, as if in punishment of a haughty spirit, nothing worthy of mention in The Book of Chronicles has happened in the place since it refused to be called The Forks. All its romance was crowded into a brief period of its early history when it was known by the old and homely name. Whether by special decree of Providence, or by hap, it is not for me to say, but at the period I refer to there were gathered in and about The Forks a rare constellation of characters—good, bad, and eccentric—that put enough of comedy, mystery, pathos, and tragedy into life to make it exceeding lively.

And verily, barring the people, there was nothing at all to redeem the place from the ordinary fate of a frontier village,—a humdrum existence, and a doom of oblivion. So far as any show of elegance in the arts of life was concerned, or any attractive features in the face of nature, it would be difficult to find a less inviting spot.

The surrounding country was settled very early in the nineteenth century by a few Scotch emigrants who came out with Lord Selkirk. Their original destination was the Hudson's Bay territory. But certain of them, being weary of the long wilderness journey, and not relishing the struggle with the Hudson's Bay forces already begun by Lord Selkirk, determined to try their fortunes at the forks of the Sydenham. Accordingly, they took up land and built their first houses a little to the north of the site whereon, years later, the village grew up.

The principal man and acknowledged leader of these first settlers was one Duncan Mactavish, a living embodiment of the

poetry, mysticism, religiousness, and superstition that mark the temperament of the Scottish Highlander. Why it was that he named his residence "The Baldoon House" I do not know. But so he named it; and partly because he was the chief man of the settlement and partly because the house came into evil repute as the haunt of witches and ghosts, it gave its name to the whole region round about. The entire district, including the future site of The Forks, was called Baldoon. And long after Duncan Mactavish and his family fled the unholy house and left the ghosts and witches in undisturbed possession, its name clave to the whole settlement.

Enough, for the present purpose, about Baldoon House. It will reappear later, possibly to shock the nerves of the timorous, certainly to exercise the ingenuity of such as are given to the solving of mysteries.

I will not trust myself to describe that bit of country. You would think me prejudiced by my sudden transition from the rocks and

mountains of New England into that original Dismal Swamp of the world—Baldoon. Old George McGarriger, who lived on higher ground four miles up the East Branch, used to say of it: "Dod-a-bit, if I see what use the Almighty has fer Baldoon, onless it's jest fer the sake of holdin' the world together!"

I prefer to offer you, presently, some extracts from a description of the original state of that country written by our local poet, of whom we are not a little proud. A son of the soil, or, more exactly, of the swamp, he would not set down aught in malice. I omit altogether our poet's treatment of the famous Baldoon House. That subject is reserved for my own purposes. Of the adjacent country he discourses thus:

"I wish there were something both pleasant and true to say of the landscape, and so forth, but you must remember 'twas landscape but part of the year; for in autumn and spring it was always a dreary waterscape, spreading for miles all around, show-

ing hither and yon just the scalp of a mound that served as a buoy to tell the proprietor where his farm waited for summer to dry it."

In one of our literary contests this poem in prose form was submitted to criticism, and a prize was offered for every instance discovered of a transgression of the laws of rhyme. Needless to say, no prize was won by any of the competitors. Somewhere, often in the middle or near the end of a long word, the lurking rhyme was found, to the confusion of the sanguine searcher after blemishes.

To resume: Turning from general to special features, and still endeavoring to cover up with humor the mournful minor cadences in which the song would sing itself, the bard further betrays his keen regret that he cannot find something to praise in his own, his native land.

"I wish there were somewhat more pleasant to say of its local attractions, et cetera; but the truth must be told, though the heavens should fall, and the truth gives Baldoon no attractions at all.

"But, contrariwise, it had bullfrogs with throats that 'volleyed and thundered' such horrible notes as were heard nowhere else, except just a few in the 'valley of death' the Six Hundred rode through.

"It had snakes,—yes, it had! But, pray, have me excused! From the days of my youth none has ever refused to pass any statement I vouched for at par; and those snakes were so many, so large, and so rare! Pray, don't ask me to tell what my credit won't bear!

"It has often been noted that things very small may persecute kings, disregardful of all their defenses, prerogatives, statutes and vetos; and such was the case with the Baldoon mosquitoes.

"Like the leaves of the forest, that no man can number; like a soul-pricking conscience, that scares away slumber; like the Phœnix, and more so, for, if by mistake you killed one, a thousand would come to his wake; like the tongue of my Dame when she got fairly 'on it,' the day that I crushed

her last love of a bonnet; like my grocer that always presents a long bill, and never lets go till he's taken his fill; like mustard, that blisters; like toothaches, that plague you; like acres of nettles; like fever and ague;—but enough! there's no end to their evil dittos: like everything bad were the Baldoon mosquitoes."

Nevertheless, to the amazement of every one, "Baldoon, with its bullfrogs and snakes, its mosquitoes and marshes, its agues and aches," was settled and redeemed from its evil state. All sorts and conditions of people managed to live there, and to secure the average degree of comfort. There, in time, grew up The Forks; and in and about it was enacted a larger than ordinary proportion of those things that make life interesting.

Who was the bard? I am bound to preserve his anonymosity by a promise, the breach whereof would bring upon me the worst horrors possible to be wrought by the ghosts of Baldoon. It is commonly believed

among us that the said malignant spirits, that infested Baldoon House as long as one timber of it clave to another, still wander, homeless, in the vicinity of their late quarters, ever seeking rest and finding it not; and eagerly expecting until some one shall do a deed bad enough to entitle them to enter and possess both the doer and his home.

The strange disposition of these ghosts to linger in our neighborhood in preference to going elsewhere was fully explained by Professor Grisdale when he was here. "It is due," he said, "to an abnormal bump of inhabitiveness which was on the skull of each prior to death. They became attached to this locality, and will wait, if need be, a hundred years for an opportunity to take up new quarters in this vicinity."

When Grisdale was with us lecturing on phrenology, he taught us many new and wonderful things. The profoundest sensation of all was made by his remarks on phrenological knowledge as being necessary to politeness.

Not that the Professor failed to claim for such learning the first place in everything, from making a willow whistle to building the Great Pyramid which is in Gizeh, in the land of Egypt. But on the subject of politeness he was zealous to persuade us that in receiving a guest the first time, or on entering into conversation with a stranger casually met, the proper thing to do is to feel his head; this with a view to adapting our treatment of him to the tastes indicated by his bumps.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the Professor said, "there can be no such thing as the practice of perfect politeness without a thorough knowledge of phrenology.

"Fancy the dismal failure that must come of attempting to entertain with music a person having the organ of tune, 1, and that of alimentiveness, 9! Or of discussing metaphysics with a man having constructiveness, 10, and ideality, 2! Or of using swear words in conversation with one whose bump of veneration towers like an Alp among his other organs!

"In every such case, ladies and gentlemen, our noble science would guide your desire to please to a happy issue. It would teach you to offer the first, not music but turkey and cranberry sauce, with a following of plum pudding and ice-cream; to discuss with the second the merits of the latest improvements in wheelbarrows; and, in conversing with the third, to speak much and reverently of things and persons good and great."

Now, there was little in the Professor's teaching, and still less in his character, that we liked. Nevertheless, the above doctrine concerning politeness took root in me. If ever any reader of these chronicles, desiring a personal acquaintance with the author, shall honor me with a call, down he will go, at the first greeting, into my best arm-chair, that I may explore among the heights and hollows of his cranial topography the way into his good graces.

Doubtless Grisdale ought to be credited, in part, with this descriptive chapter, offered

as a politeness due to my reader's bump of locality, which, like Tom Watson's Senator, has a sacred right to know where it is "at."

CHAPTER II.

"MY DAUGHTER JANE."

By all odds *the* "original" of our whole countryside was old George M'Garriger—a man of Scotch-Irish lineage, but American by three generations.

When the struggle of the Thirteen Colonies was finally and in a baptism of blood named a revolution instead of a rebellion, George M'Garriger's father and family, together with many more staunch United Empire Loyalists, came out into the Canadian wilderness for love of

"Britain's laws and Britain's crown,
And Britain's flag of long renown."

Being of a very plastic nature, there was left no trace of broad Scotch, nor of Irish brogue, on old George's tongue. Instead he had taken on the peculiarities of dialect his

parents had brought over from York State, and such as prevailed round about Sydenham Forks, and had added to these many a quaint idiom and expression of his own invention.

Everybody at The Forks, and for many miles east and north, knew old George personally, or by repute. His sayings and doings were the rich reserves drawn upon for conversation when weather, crops, and "the health of your folks" had been discussed to satisfaction. Some new freak of his was more sure to be current than silver coin; and it was a part of good-fellowship to tender "old George's latest" just as the men passed the plug of tobacco and the women offered the cup of tea.

Perhaps no man ever gained so wide a notoriety on so little of evil in character and conduct. Although he was no churchman, the innocence of a lamb and the tenderness and ingenuousness of a good child lived right on in old George into his sixties—the age he had reached when I saw him last.

In voicing that strange disposition we have to make our remarks emphatic by the use of expletives, where other men used the name of the Creator and Savior of mankind profanely, old George would put in, "Bless-my-soul!" and "Dod-a-bit!"—very deliberately said, with a long pause between syllables, and a rising inflection at the end.

One day, in answer to my question, "What do you mean by Dod-a-bit?" he said:

"W'y, bless—my—soul! boy, it answers jest es well es cuss words, and don't mean nothin'. See here, neighbor, there was old Bill Wilson—you didn't know him—he's ben dead this long time. But old Bill us't to do most everything thet wus bad. One day when he wus corned I sais to him, 'Bill, you git drunk; you ain't p'tikler to tell the truth; sometimes you take what ain't yourn; you fight; but you never cuss; what's the reason you never cuss?' Old Bill wus jest drunk enough to take it all right; an' he winked his eye, an' said, 'W'y,

George, d'ye take me fer a nat'ral fool? I don't do nothin' fer nothin' w'en I know it! I git drunk to forgit some things, an' have a good time. W'en I fight it's to best the other feller. If I lie it's to gain a pint thet ain't in reach of the truth. W'en I take things it's becase I want 'em, an' can't git 'em so easy any other way. But if I should cuss, the other fellow wouldn't be hurt by it, an' I would. Anyhow, George, I c'nsider thet it's beneath a man of my standin' in sussiety to swear!' "

Then up spoke Joe Roach, a professional ox-teamster, who was listening: "Thet's all right, Uncle George. Your skim-milk swearin' may do fer common, but it's no use on special uccasions. It's jest plum impossible to make a string of five yoke of oxen pull, an' pull together, without swearin' at 'em in the old fashion—thet's to say, with all the cream onto it."

In some heat, that just showed in his reddening face and kindling eyes, old George made answer:

"Joe, ye say thet because yer ig'nunt. Lem me tell ye suthin' better to say on special uccasions. Next time ye hitch to a big timber with five yoke, or ten yoke, or a string of cattle es long es from here to The Forks, you jest jump up onto the butt an' holler 'Teapot!' Then rush up an' down yer string of cattle shoutin' Teapot! Teapot! an' lay on the gad after it, like ye do when ye swear at 'em. Dod-a-bit! ye'll find thet the oxen 'll pull jest es well fer teapot es fer cussin'."

In his way old George M'Garriger was as zealous for what he held to be right as any Hebrew prophet, and would lift up his voice like a trumpet in defense of it.

He never became *very* uncomfortable to other people except when he took a fad. No Baldoon mosquito ravening for gore could be more persistent or more irritating than he when he once got his mind set on a certain thing, and the thing was slow in coming to pass. The fad possessed him wholly. Morning, noon, and night, and at

midnight, if opportunity served, he would thrust it upon you.

Of course this was all explained to everybody's satisfaction when Professor Grisdale felt old George's head, and said: "This man has concentrativeness, 10+, and firmness, 9; when one thing has him nothing else can get him, and he would buttonhole all creation, and its cousin, in the interest of his fad."

After hearing that we found it easier to bear and forbear. A man having 9 degrees of firmness out of a possible 10, and 10 degrees *plus* of concentrativeness, could no more help being a bore than Johnny Black could help having his big nose, that created hilarity wherever he went.

There came a time, however, when old George's usually innocent eccentricities wrought ghastly mischief in his own well-beloved family circle. He had five marriageable daughters. One day he awoke to the fact that none of them was being sought after by the young men, which thing dis-

turbed him sadly; it was a reproach to the house of M'Garriger, and must be removed.

Not so did Mary, his wife, regard the situation. She was a canny Scottish woman, strong alike of body, mind, and heart, and as good as she was strong. It may have been in part because of her own experience in married life with one so peculiar as her "man" had proved to be, and in part because the mother altogether dominated her nature, but for some reason or combination of reasons she was well pleased to keep her daughters at her side.

Young men who called at the M'Garriger home without some ordinary errand were received by the mistress so frigidly that few had the courage to repeat the visit. Mrs. M'Garriger's mental attitude and visible conduct toward such visitors resembled those of a mother-hen gathering her brood under her wings to protect them against the wicked hawks. As a consequence, the daughters had almost no opportunities in their own home of meeting young men in

those safe ways that lead on to honorable matrimony. In outward seeming the girls took their mother's view, and kept the young men at arm's length—and more.

Now, when the fad of marrying off his five daughters took possession of George M'Garriger's No. 10+ concentrativeness, and annexed thereto his No. 9 firmness, things began to come to pass; but not in the way he desired and expected.

With purpose and plan matured, old George began to canvass the market. Whenever and wherever he met young men —and any unmarried man, bachelor or widower, was young in his sense—his tongue was eloquent of the theme upon which his mind had become concentrated to the tenth degree, plus.

"Bless—my—soul! boy, why don't ye come up an' see my girls? Nice girls es kin be found; but somehow they're 'fraid o' the young men, an' the young men are 'fraid o' them. But ye don't need! Fine, peaceable girls; an' kin keep house 's well's their

mother. Jest you come up, an' I'll use ye well.

"Now, there's my daughter Jane—han'-some es any picter, an' well eddicated; teaches school, an' kin fry doughnuts with any girl on the river! But bless—my—soul! how 'fraid she is o' the young men! Can't get nigh enough to tech her with a ten-foot pole!

"Say, if any young man comes to see my daughter Jane, dod-a-bit! but I'll use him well—I'll put him an' his horse in the stable an' give him plenty hay an' oats to eat!"

To further his matrimonial enterprise old George made many "bees," and invited all the young men within coming distance. His subtle thought was: "They'll see the girls; and eat of the savory food; and, may-hap, one of them will wish to mate with 'my daughter Jane.'"

One evening his hope rose very high. After the day's work the boys gathered in the front yard, as was their wont, to try their strength and suppleness in the various

ways of country athletics—old George, meanwhile, looking on and expecting until the desire of his heart would come to pass. After jumping and wrestling to satisfaction, Tom Lyon, leading toward the house, said: "Come on, boys, it's time to go in an' see the girls." Thereupon Si Snider, that mischief of the world, planted himself in the way, and cried aloud: "No, sir; not by a long chalk! The girls don't want to see you, an' you ain't goin' in there to-night!"

I think George M'Garriger was never so angry as at that moment. In an instant he had Snider by the throat with one hand, and, some say, lifted the other to strike. The next moment, however, his better nature asserted itself so far that he loosened his grip of the young man's neck. But rage still blazed in his eyes, and well nigh paralyzed his tongue. When he had recovered his speech a little, though still stuttering with excitement, he shouted:

"Si, ye'r a blame fool! W'y don't ye let

the boy alone? Ye'r like the dog, an' the hay, an' the cow!"

If old George's zeal to settle his daughters had had no other effect than to create amusement at their expense that would have been bad enough. But it did infinitely worse. It raised the question in some minds, "What's the matter with the M'Garriger girls, anyway?" and it entered into one pair of nostrils that had a keen scent for scandal, and set wagging a tongue that had a never-empty poison-bag at its roots.

Mary Jane Somers was an anomaly. Professor Grisdale read from her bumps such a character for goodness that the new minister whispered in my ear: "Surely, Brother Somers married an angel unawares." And, verily, while listening to her tremulant, sobbing voice when she "engaged" in the weekly prayer-meeting, one found it difficult to dissent from the minister's verdict.

But somewhere in Mary Jane's make-up there was a mystery of iniquity that could not be appreciated by the phrenologist's

fingers, nor by the uncritical ears wherewith we ought to listen to the voice of prayer. For cause we had come to dread her tongue more than we did the Day of Judgment.

Like some others, Mary Jane began to make inquisition into the problems suggested by old George's eagerness to marry his daughters, and his utter failure to do so. She was not long in concluding that something must be wrong with the girls—and in her vocabulary "something wrong" with a girl meant but one thing. And because the innocent old man had most exploited "my daughter Jane"—she being the eldest of the flock—Mary Jane was soon wrestling inwardly with the conviction that "if the truth was only known about that Jane M'Garriger folks would open their eyes fer once."

Having been thus, by dark suspicions, rendered keenly sensitive to everything that would aid in convicting Jane M'Garriger of "something wrong," Mary Jane Somers went a journey of twenty miles up the East Branch, to attend campmeeting. There,

after her habit, and for the twentieth time, she was entirely sanctified. She was handled after so powerful a manner that she fell as one dead, and lay in a trance for several hours.

In the intervals between services Mary Jane was guest with old George's brother William and his wife, their house being convenient to the camp. To her great surprise —later, I fear, it became satisfaction—Mary Jane found in that hitherto childless home a bouncing boy-baby of two years!

On her return from campmeeting Mary Jane set forth, in a way all her own, the ugly patchwork made of what she saw at William M'Garriger's, and of what she drew out of her unsuspecting host and hostess by cunning devices. At various tea-drinkings and quiltings this mistress of the Black Art managed the conversation so that she appeared a pitying saint yielding up to public demand a little, only, of the abounding evil she knew of Jane M'Garriger, and yielding it reluctantly and in sorrow.

"I'm sure you all know thet I'm a woman thet keeps her tongue with all diligence, fer out of it are the issues of life.

"I always think es much es twice or three times afore I speak once, fer right well I know thet by our words we're goin' to be justified, an' by our words we're goin' to be condemned; an' thet if any one offend not with her tongue the same is a perfect man.

"But things hes come to sich a pass with them M'Garriger girls! An' old George a-runnin' the country tryin' to peddle off 'my daughter Jane!' An' some of us hevin' daughters thet might go an' do likewise; an' some hevin' sons thet might git on-equally yoked together with sich as them!"

Thereupon, for a space, the company mourned to one another over the perils that threatened their sons and daughters, and insisted that it was Mary Jane's solemn duty to speak right out.

"Wal, I stayed at Bill M'Garriger's when I was up to campmeetin'—an' if any of you want to know what's the matter with 'my

daughter Jane' jest you go up there. Bill's folks never hed any childurn, an' couldn't hev any grandchildurn, but ther's a two-year-old boy-baby in their house. They say it's one they adapted. Mebbe it is. But it's the very picter of Jane M'Garriger;—leastwise, the part that don't look like her is Andy Harris over agin, the feller that skipped most three year ago, nobody knows why or where. An' then" (here her voice sank to a thrilling half-whisper) "Jane M'Garriger went up to her uncle Bill's two year ago; an' stayed there all through the summer vacation; an' come back here lookin' peekid an' distressed. Now, you jest put thet, an' thet, an' thet, together an' see what you make of it."

The storm raised by the incantations of Mary Jane Somers raged over a wide area, having its center, in turns, here and there and everywhere, up and down the East Branch and the North Branch, and at The Forks. Jane M'Garriger's good name was blighted suddenly, as a fair flower is stricken

with the black death in a single night of frost.

I was on my way to the M'Garriger home, having the conviction that no one else would undertake the painful duty of friendship. Half a mile from the house I met old George coming in search of me, and fuming with excitement. While he was yet a great way off I perceived that my errand had been forestalled;—the fury of the storm had burst upon them.

"Bless—my—soul, neighbor, I'm glad to see ye! Say, we're in the blackest kind o' trouble at our house. You know my girls; an' you know their mother; an' how they've ben raised es decent, nice girls es ever stepped in shoe-luther! An' now——they're sayin'——thet my daughter Jane is—is—is——," but he couldn't say it. The grief and tears of fatherhood in sore affliction for a child to whom the uttermost calamity had come choked him. And, although my own heart was oppressed with the burden of his, I noted with a mournful satisfaction that old

George, commonly held in light esteem, was transfigured by this great sorrow into a man of much dignity.

We walked into the shadowed home together. The girls had all vanished; but Mary M'Garriger met me at the door, and let fall upon my extended hand some drops that were like a baptism of holy waters. After uttering, between sobs, some things which I could not write without blushing, she went on to say:

"An' noo, ye'r no tae be lik' ma' doitered auld man, there, an' thenk the warst o' Janie. She juist feenished tellin't a' oo'er tae me when ye cam' in at the gate—an'——*praise be!*——bad es it es——it micht be muckle waur!

"As ye ken weel, A' wes aye fichtin' the lads awa' frae oor hoose. A' cudna thole tae pairt wi' ma' dochters tae ony o' thae feckless neer-dae-weels that wrought on the timmer in wenter, an' wasted their wage in idleness a' the rest o' the year. An' A' wes aye sayin' tae ma lassies, ye'll see'n ye keep

yirsels tae yirsels till men come yir way that's ta'en up lan', an' made hooses tae shelter ye.'

"Guid forgie ma', gin A' guidit them ill! A'm seein', the noo, that ane way or anither lads an' lassies wull mate, lik' birds in spreng. A' sair misdoot that the ane way A' leavit open tae them wesna the best. A lassie's hairt should be free tae coonsel wi' her ain mither, an' hae her laddie gae in an' oot o' but an' ben in her ain hame."

When this very proper but very humiliating confession was off her mind, and her soul began to revive under its good effect, Mrs. M'Garriger proceeded with growing emphasis:

"It wes in the hoose o' Mary Jane Somers, that hes the muckle Deil in her tongue (noo, George, ye needna glower at ma' lik' yon, A' wull say 't, an' A' carena hoo mony hunnerd times she's been sanctifeed, her tongue's juist blisterin' wi' the fires o' hell!), an' it wes in her ain hoose that Janie tuik up wi' Andy Harris.

"A'm no sayin' that Andy wasna a likely lad tae luik at; nor that he wes ill-behavit. But he wes lik' the lave o' the young men o' these pairts, he didna hain the siller he wroucht hard for in wenter, but wasted it in simmer idleness.

"Weel, when Janie daurna breng her young man hame, nor tell her ain mither that her hairt hed gaen frae her; an' hed tae meet Andy in ither fouk's hooses, an' in hoors o' dairkness by the reever side; an' they hed grown weary o' it a'—at long last they commeeted a great folly.

"Janie wes tae gae up the North Branch on a veesit o' three days. In thae three days a' the folly an' a' the sin they hae deen wes wroucht.

"On the first day, unbeknown to ony o' her kin, Janie gaed awa' wi' Andy tae Sairnia, an' ower the reever to Port Huron, an' there they were merrit by a juistice o' the peace. The second day, an' the third, they bided there, in Port Huron, thegither. On the fourth day they pairted in luve an'

good faith wi' ane anither; an' Janie cam' home es frae her veesit. But Andy gaed awa' west tae seek a fortune where there's gowd to be howkit oot o' the groon'; for he daured na claim Janie o' me untel he cud tak' her tae a weel-plenished hoose o' hes ain. An' bein' feart that A' micht suspeecion, an' mak' sairch, an' fin' oot before their ain time o' lettin' ma' ken, Janie gar'd Andy tak' her merridge lines wi' him.

"When the tribble that the thochtless bairns hedna foreseen wes near Janie wes ready to dee for the bitterness o' it. Andy hed juist begood tae gather for their hame, an' she cudna ca' him back sae sune. An', wae's me that it wes sae at siccan a time, she wes frichtit o' her ain mither——an' turned tae uncle Weelum's in her distress.

"A' needna be tellin' ye muckle mair. To thes day Andy disna ken that he's the faither o' a twa-year-auld bairn—'deed, A' didna ken't masel, nor suspeecion onything o' a' A've tell't ye, till juist three days syne.

"Janie gaes nae mair till the schule; nor wull she show her face tae ony ootside o' thes hoose, untel Andy's here tae stan' by her side an' say, 'Thes es ma' wife; an' thes es ma' son, begotten in lawful wedlock.'

"Geordie an' me's gaen tae uncle Weelum's on the morrow tae breng the bairn tae his mither, that hesna daur'd tae see him but ance sin' he wes born. It wud fair break yir hairt tae hear the lassie mournin' tae me o' a' thae weekid thengs a leein' tongue hes thrapit upon her; an', syne, tae see her face clear, an' her een shine oot, lik' the sun o' Aprile glintin' through the rain, when she thenks o' her baby, that by the morn's nicht she'll be haudin' tae her breist."

The day after my visit to the M'Garrigers two letters in a single envelope started west. They must have fallen upon the unprepared soul of Andy Harris with the impact of twin thunderbolts.

"Dear Andy: If you love me, and I know

you do, drop everything and come home. I meant to keep something from you, as I kept it from every one here but Uncle William's folk; for I wanted you to stay until you would be satisfied with what you had made. But prying eyes have discovered my secret, and a lying tongue has set the whole place on fire with the vilest scandal about me. Andy, I have a baby, now two years old; *and people are saying that I have no husband.* I know your heart and trust it. Come to your true wife.

"JANE HARRIS."

"Andy Harris: In the name o' the Almichty, an' in anither name that stands neist to hes in thes matter, an' that's ma' ain es Janie's mither, A' bid ye come hame an' faither yir bairn an' husband yir wife lik' a man. MARY M'GARRIGER."

At the home coming of Andy Harris these events moved rapidly to their climax.

Andy was more than a likely lad to look at. Great thews and sinews compacted together in manly symmetry, and a facial

expression of shrewdness, courage, cheerfulness, and good will toward all men, women, and children, made him a general favorite. And then, although he did not come back to us a millionaire, he brought thousands enough to make him the richest man on the East Branch, with a half interest in a gold mine as a reserve of unmeasured and immeasurable possibilities.

I am not equal to the stunning effect upon Andy of the two letters that went west; nor to the incredible swiftness of his movements in settling up his western affairs, and making that flying journey eastward; neither was I there to see. As for his meeting with Jane and his boy, no words of man could do it justice. On that subject no one could approach the eloquence of Janie's mother.

"We didna ken when tae expec' him; but we suspeecioned that he'd no let the post ootrin him wi' a letter. An' Janie wes aye croonin' tae her bairn, an' sayin': 'He's comin'! Daddy's comin' lik' the win' across

the big world tae his ain laddie. An' ilka day she gaed oot under the heavens an' luikit intae the west wi' the face o' ane that sees veesions an' hears voices that are no mortal. As sure's deith, it wud be the west win' that aye whespered tae her o' Andy, an' tell't whaur he wes, at ae time an' anither, in hes journey. For on the morn o' that nicht when he cam' she cried tae me, 'Mither, thes es the day! Andy'll come the day!'—an' it wes sae."

"An', syne, she pit on her Sabbath goon, an' mad' hersel' denty wi' ornaments, an' tied a bonnie ribbon in her hair. As for the wee bit laddie, he wes lik' King Solomon in a' hes glory, wi' the fine thengs she pit on him. An' a' that day they gaed oot an' in, playin' thirsel's lik' twa schule bairns keepin' holiday, an' cryin' on ane anither, 'Daddy's comin!'

"Yi'll no believe it; but when at long last Andy did come, juist as the sun wes gaen doon, Janie an' me baith missed seein' him untel he wes half-way frae the gate tae the

hoose. It wes the lad that seid him first, an' ran awa' doon the path cryin' 'Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!' es if he ken't his faither the vera first glempse he ever had o' him! Wesna that wonnerfu'? But his mither had been learnin' him, mony a day, tae say that word.

"Weel, when Janie an' me turned aboot tae see whaur the bairn wes rinnin' tae, there stood Andy—an' a bonnie, big, broon man he wes—wi' hes son in hes airms, an' a spate a' tears poorin' doon his face. Hoo Janie got tae him sae quick A' canna tell. There wes juist a flash, lik' a glent o' the sun off o' a merror, an' she wes hangin' aboot hes neck, an' haudin' the boy an' him es though there wesna ony theng, nor onybody else, in a' the warld. It wes lik' the voice o' some rejoicin' angel when she cried, 'O Andy! Andy! ma' ain dear man, A' ken't ye wud come when ye hard hoo it wes wi' me!' "

Andy's meek acknowledgment of culpable folly, and his manly purpose to vindicate to

the uttermost the good name of his wife, became manifest at once.

First, there was the grand and memorable christening dinner at the M'Garrigers' the like of which had never been seen on the East Branch. In planning for it Andy said to his mother-in-law:

"I ain't come back a pauper, mother. Remember thet it's my treat fer Janie an' the boy; an' make it somethin' scrumpshus. Hev chickens an' turkeys an' roasters, an' set out sech a meal es haint ben seen fer ten year. I want ye to ask all the folks from The Forks to the Institooshun" (a colony of escaped slaves), "an' be sure to ask old Henson an' some of his niggers from the Institooshun. But Frank Somers an' Mary Jane ain't to be ast. I've got some settlin' to do with them, by'me bye; but fer now let 'em chaw on bein' counted below the niggers. You kin send up to Sarnia fer yir own Free Church minister to do the baptizin'; an' seein' it's a long ways to come here's two twentys an' a ten, in gold, fer his fee."

The great day of the feast came. So did the multitude of guests, until the house and the grounds were thronged with them. When the minister stood forth in a conspicuous place to begin the ceremony he was stayed by the voice of Andy:

"Minister, before you begin, I'd like to hev you read this little document so's all the people kin hear you." And the minister read from the paper Andy put into his hand, as follows:

"This writing certifies that on the twentieth day of August, 18—, Andrew Harris and Jane M'Garriger were married by me, by authority of license, at Port Huron, in the State of Michigan.

"JOHN GESNER, J. P."

When the cheering had subsided that burst forth on the reading of Janie's marriage lines, the ceremony proceeded, and the lad was baptized Andrew George, for his father and for the proudest of grandfathers.

The next day Andy went to Detroit, and returned in due time, bringing with him

some twenty copies of the certificate of marriage, printed on stout cardboard in letters of black and crimson and gold. These—save one—he nailed up in the most public places, having first written on the margin of each:

"To be left jest where it is fer a year an' a day. ANDY HARRIS."

The reserved copy was destined to lead on to the one act of violence committed by Andy. On a certain moonlit midnight he nailed that copy, as a witness against Mary Jane, to a tree that stood in the road in front of Frank Somers' gate, with the written appendix:

"Frank: This must be left jest where I've put it fer a year an' a day, or you must fight. ANDY HARRIS."

The first day thereafter, and the second, when Andy walked past the Somers' home, the card was in place; but the third day he found it lying in scattered fragments on the ground. This was exactly what he expected to happen, sooner or later. He had no idea

that Mary Jane would tolerate for long such an accuser at her very gate. Two days she had writhed under the torture of seeing every passer-by halt and read the card, and then glance toward her house with an expression of amusement and disgust. She had entreated and even commanded Frank to take it down. But Frank, being no hero, trembled before the warlike appendix in Andy's handwriting, and did not obey. At last, in a paroxysm of mortification and rage, she, herself, laid violent hands on the obnoxious card, tore it into fragments, and trampled them under her feet.

Andy looked upon the ruins of his card, smiled in a satisfied way, and went in search of Frank Somers. When they met there was a lively encounter.

"Frank, thet card is down."

"Yes, Andy; but I didn't tech it. It wus Mary Jane thet took it down."

"I don't care which of ye done it; an' I'm ruther glad it's down. Lem—me—see; ye married Mary Jane, di. 't ye, Frank?"

"W'y, yes; of course I married her."

"Ye married her fer better er fer wuss, didn't ye?"

"Cert'nly, them wus the words the preacher made me say."

"Wal, Frank, I dunno how much o' the better ye've hed, but ye'r goin' to take some o' the wuss, right now. Ef Mary Jane wus a man I'd hev nothin' to say to you. Ef my card hed ben left a year an' a day where I put it, I guess she'd hev been punished anough fer her lyin' about Janie, an' makin' folks believe thet she wus bad.

"But the card hes ben took down; an' Mary Jane's a woman, an' can't be teched. Frank, somebody's got to be hurt fer Mary Jane, an' you're him! Ef ye kin hurt me some while I'm lickin' ye fer Mary Jane I shan't be sorry. I desarve it fer bein' sich a blame fool an' leavin' Janie es I did. So, git ready, Frank! I'm comin' fer ye now! Hurt me es much es ye kin!"

When Frank saw Andy "comin' fer" him, the coward's frenzy seized him; and,

laying hold of a convenient handspike, he struck his one blow in that battle. Andy would have died for Janie under that blow had he not fended with his left arm. As it was the arm was broken between the wrist and the elbow; but nothing daunted, Andy still advanced, depending on his good right hand.

I do not care to describe what followed. It will have been seen that Andy is a favorite with me, notwithstanding his one culpably thoughtless act. But I cannot make myself admire him in going on to thrash so severely a cowed coward, although he did it with one hand, while the other hung by a broken arm. Mary Jane had to nurse Frank for a whole month, but esteemed that a lesser evil than to have Andy's accusing card remain posted at her gate to revive in every one passing that way the memory of her evil speaking.

This will be a convenient point at which to say au revoir to "my daughter Jane." The romance of a human life is never ended.

We shall meet her again; but never in such toils as were drawn about her feet by giddy young love, by parental zeal acting without discretion, and by a neighbor's tongue that had "the muckle Deil" in it.

CHAPTER III.

OUR VILLAGE SATIRIST.

Dan Littleton, everybody called him. He had been "everything by turns and nothing long";—had served one apprenticeship on his father's farm, another in the lumber-woods, another in Carolin's general store, and a fourth at Ann Arbor taking a partial course in the university.

In all changes, however, Dan remained unchanged in his keen perception of the weak under-side of human nature, and in his disposition and power to bite it and sting it with words.

In justice to him it must be said that personal deformities and the crude sayings of plain people who made no pretension to cleverness, never drew a shaft from his full quiver. But woe to those who were puffed up with vanity!—whether it was the pride of

wealth, or of caste, or of learning, or of purple and fine linen. Woe unto them when Dan Littleton came within sight or hearing of their vanities. He could no more restrain his blistering words than his Irish grandsire could control his shillalah when he saw an inviting head to hit at Donnybrook Fair.

On one occasion Dan met two fine stranger ladies on the sidewalk and did a thing that covered us all with shame. The ladies were gorgeous—and ridiculous, too—in the newest style of dress and carriage, the "Grecian Bend," a style that no prudent man will undertake to describe. While they were yet twenty yards distant Dan caught sight of them and struck an attitude, shading his eyes with one hand as if transfixed and dazzled by an approaching glory. When they had advanced to within ten feet of where he was standing, and were giggling to one another about the uncouth personage in their way, Dan gave a great leap, sidewise, into the middle of the street, and

clasping his hands as if in prayer to divinities from a higher sphere, cried, in a trembling voice: "Forgive me, ladies, for being in the same world with you, and I'll never do it again!" Then he turned and ran from their presence as if he meant to literally rid the world they inhabited of a person so incongruous as himself.

In his famous encounter with Professor Grisdale Dan showed at his best, in the beginning, but suffered ruinous defeat and disaster at the end. His antagonist proved to be a man of unsuspected versatility and resources.

The Professor had invited attack by ridiculous assumptions as to the scope of his favorite science, and his own proficiency in it. Furthermore, he was petty and irritating in his ways of pressing the silver collection at the door, and the sale of head-charts at a dollar each when he could not get a larger sum. In particular, parents had been teased, publicly and privately, with the iterated and reiterated admonition

that it was impossible to choose wisely a business or a profession for their children without Professor Grisdale's chart to guide them in the choice.

By degrees Dan Littleton's dislike for the Professor rose above the danger point, and there was war. One morning we found the village ornamented throughout its length and breadth with glaring posters announcing a lecture on an entirely new development in the science of phrenology.

"Professor Gulliver Gunne will deliver his celebrated lecture on Insect Phrenology in the Town Hall, this evening, at eight o'clock. Admission free."

After the first surprise had a little abated it began to be rumored about the town that Dan Littleton was at the bottom of the affair, and would, probably, deliver the lecture himself. That was enough to crowd the town hall to its doors.

It is a matter of deep regret that only a few paragraphs of the lecture can be given here. Something happened that night

which brought upon it the proverbial fate of too many good things and persons—an early and a sudden death. If any one is curious to see the complete working out of that piece of splendid and biting satire I shall be happy to gratify him, for I have the manuscript of it by me to this day.

The hour came, and the audience. The man came also, and his name was Dan. But he was metamorphosed into a ruddy-faced, rotund, middle-aged man who might be taken for a philanthropist seeking whom he might deliver, or a well-disguised humbug seeking whom he might devour. In fact, Dan had "made himself up," with consummate skill, to resemble the then greatest showman on earth, who had just begun to say, "The world likes to be humbugged and is willing to pay for it";—and in resembling him he was as much like Professor Grisdale as one newly-minted dime is like another. The one feature necessary to the complete thrill of the occasion was not lacking—Grisdale was there and in a front seat.

In the silence of keen expectancy that reigned supreme Dan, alias Professor Gulliver Gunne, arose, laid his open manuscript on the desk, and, having leisurely adjusted his gold-rimmed but lensless spectacles, began his "Celebrated Lecture on Insect Phrenology."

"Ladies and Gentlemen: In the few years last past the science of phrenology has made some wonderful strides.

"It has been applied to matrimony in the way of aiding you to choose a congenial partner of your bosom—one whose temper will 'compat,' as it were, with your own.

"By this useful science, for the benefit of mankind, you can select yourself as good raw material for a doctor, or a lawyer, or a preacher, or a president of the United States.

"Very recently it has been discovered that, by phrenology, the brute-beasts may be chosen with unerring certainty for any special use. You can pick out dogs that will bark in the night when your enemy

wants to sleep; and mules that will buck; and horses that will either balk or run away, as you may prefer; and cattle that will horn your enemy, or will break into his garden and convert his cabbages and turnips, his cauliflowers and asparagus, into your milk and beef. I have a farmer-friend who never buys a sheep without first feeling his bumps. He selects only those that have combativeness very large. Why does he do this? Because, when one of his sheep proves a failure for mutton, or for wool, he can sell him at a good profit among his dairy products as a first-class butter.

"But, ladies and gentlemen, the latest advance, and by far the greatest that phrenology has made at a single stride, is to be seen in my own astounding discovery that it applies to insects as well as to beasts and to men. It is a fact, ladies and gentlemen, that under the microscope you can read from their cranial developments the characteristics of bees, flies, gnats, et cetera.

"Permit me a single explanatory remark

in passing. As most insects are nearly or quite baldheaded you can appreciate their bumps by vision alone, without the aid of the fingers. It is well to know this when the subject is a hornet."

At this point Dan's lecture came to an untimely end. During the next thirty minutes things happened in that room that made the soberest among us think that Satan had entered into some of our choicest people.

When Dan finished the sentence, "It is well to know this when the subject is a hornet," he paused a moment to give the people time to see the point of his joke. Just then the first interruption occurred. Up from the southwest corner of the hall came the well-known, inarticulate sounds of a kiss—the lingering, luscious prelude, growing in fervor, and culminating in a hearty smack.

This was followed by a young man's voice testifying of keen enjoyment in expressions that sounded like "e-yum! e-yum! e-yum!"

And then a shocked, tremulant feminine voice cried out, "Oh, Tom! Yeh didn't ought to, right before folks!"

Every eye turned to the seats occupied by Tom Jenner and Jenny Mowat,—as well-behaved and bashful a couple as could be found in the county of Lambton. The smack came from that spot. The voices were the voices of Tom and Jenny. What could it mean? Had love overpowered rustic bashfulness and common decency?

Under the hundreds of accusing eyes the young couple were distressed beyond measure. Poor Jenny sobbed aloud. Tom sprang to his feet, his face aflame, and swinging his great fists in challenge of everybody, roared, "I guess I know how to behave myself decent! I know I didn't ought to; an' I didn't! Whoever says I did tells a blame no sech thing; an' I want to see him outside, right now!"

While the Tom and Jenny episode was swiftly moving to a climax another, equally unaccountable, began. Billy Fish was the

landlord of the village tavern. He was an ideal Boniface—fat, bald, ruddy, jolly, and English. He set the example of generous living in all things, especially in the consumption of beer. "Billy is a beer barrel in the morning, and a barrel of beer in the evening," was a common saying and belief.

At the moment when Tom Jenner was asserting his innocence as to the kiss, Billy Fish's deep voice rolled over the audience and up to the ears of the astonished Dan.

"Say, Dan'el, yeh don't suit me! Yeh make too much noise with yer mouth! That's all bloomin' rot about bald-'eaded hinsecks with phrenology bumps on their 'eads. Let's 'ave a word o' prayer!"

Dan collapsed, utterly. Tom Jenner might be quieted down, he had thought, so that the lecture could be resumed; but Fish's outbreak seemed fatal to such a hope. White with wrath, he turned toward Billy and in tones that were awful in their severity and judicial calmness demanded,

"Do I understand, Mr. Fish, that you propose to offer up a prayer?"

The village landlord was on his feet in an instant, and in a voice that betrayed much alarm made answer:

"No, Dan'el; yeh don't understand that I want to hoffer a prayer! Wish to 'eaven I could; but I ain't in that line, no more than you be, Dan'el! I 'eard wot you all 'eard, an' it sounded enough like me for to be me; but it wasn't me! Likewise, Tom Jenner didn't kiss Jenny Mowat. I was lookin' at 'em w'en the noise was made, an' they was both behavin' proper. It's my belief that Satan has broke loose in this 'ere 'all, an' I'm goin' away, immediate."

While Billy was making his way out Deacon Brewer fell into sudden and appalling disgrace. The Deacon was seventy years old; he was tall, lean and bloodless; he wore a glorious crown of snow-white hair; he never, on any occasion, smiled, and was altogether the properest man in the community. He happened, by an evil

chance, to be seated between his wife and Betsy Simpkins—an immaculate, mature, maiden lady, sharp of features and sharper of speech. Just as Fish was going out of the door the voice of Miss Simpkins, pitched in upper G, cried aloud:

"Deacon Brewer! For shame! I'll thank you, Deacon Brewer, to take your arm away!"

Surely, Billy had spoken the truth! Satan had broken loose among us!

Mrs. Brewer, being of a peppery and jealous disposition, did not wait to investigate. With one withering, annihilating glance at her fallen husband she made for the door, her head high in air, and her eyes looking neither to the right hand nor to the left.

Deacon Brewer, yet numb with the shock, struggled to his feet and called after her: "Miranda, Miranda, don't go, but hear me!" But Miranda went; and the slam of the door seemed to say that the way of reconciliation between them was closed for-

ever. Then the Deacon appealed to the audience:

"Brethren, you have known me, and you have known Sister Simpkins, these many years. The strange events that have happened here to-night are beyond us all. We can only deny the disgraceful things which have been insinuated against us, perhaps by an infernal power. Tom Jenner says he didn't. Billy Fish says he didn't. I say I didn't. And I now ask Sister Simpkins whether she did or didn't say that evil thing about me; and whether to-night, or at any time, I ever put my arm about her waist."

Betsy Simpkins arose and said her say in a very decided manner:

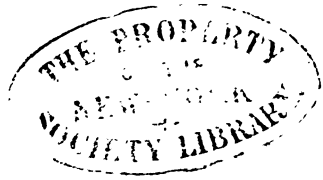
"No, Deacon Brewer; I hain't opened my mouth to say anything until this blessed minute. Now thet I hev opened it I will remark thet yeh never, in all yer life, put yer arm around me; if yeh hed, Mrs. Brewer would hev been a widder from that time. No man ever did, an' no man ever

will, put his arm about Betsy Simpkin's waist!"

Here the enormity involved in the mere supposition so excited Betsy that her voice ran up to a piercing cadenza, and then broke into sobs.

The situation had become intolerable. The men were hopelessly mystified. The women were becoming hysterical. Dan thought it high time to seek the benefit of clergy.

Happily the right man was in the audience —the Reverend Thomas Nivens, a Scotch divine whom every one honored for his sound learning, manly piety, and general nobility of character. If anything in his ways was less than pleasant it was a painful exactness as to language. Every word of his was according to the strictest canons of grammar and rhetoric. It would have been a luxury to have heard an occasional lapse in his speech. But to him words were grave responsibilities—things of power, not to be trifled with. Bad grammar, slovenly sen-


THE PROPERTY
OF THE
SOCIETY LIBRARY

tences, and slang, were next in enormity to an open breach of the Decalogue in his system of ethics. To this worthy minister Dan appealed.

"Doctor Nivens, you have witnessed the strange things which have taken place here. They are beyond my comprehension. Will you speak a little, and say what you think of them? Are we bewitched? or bedeviled? Or have the old Baldoon ghosts looked in upon us to-night?"

Very slowly and solemnly Doctor Nivens arose, cleared his throat, locked his fingers, braced his thumbs against one another, and began:

'My brethren, it is not becoming to speak rashly concerning such demonstrations as have, but now, taken place in our midst. But I may say there is no evidence that they were produced either by disembodied human spirits or by witches.

"I am inclined to the opinion that, for our multiplied sins, Satan has been permitted to gain an advantage over us. One of the

descriptive titles given him in Scripture is the 'Accuser of the Brethren.'

"Now, every one of these mysterious utterances has been in the nature of an accusation of persons whom we hold to be innocent of the things whereof they have been accused. I cannot believe that young Tom Jenner kissed his lassie in that public and indecent manner, whatever he may do in private; nor that Billy Fish assailed the lecturer of the evening in the offensive words that seemed to fall from his lips; nor that Deacon Brewer was guilty of embracing Miss Simpkins.

"Brethren, if Satan is doing these things he overreached himself when he suggested prayer. We will now take him at his word and vanquish him with the weapon he has thrust, as it were, into our hands; for

'Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.' "

There was a moment of solemn pause; all were listening reverently for the first words of prayer; but horror upon

horrors! We heard the minister's voice saying:

"No; we won't have no prayer, neither! Satan ain't half the feller most folks thinks he is! I'll be——buttered ef I don't b'leeve I'm enough fer him, myself alone! Me an' Deacon Brewer is, anyway! Hooray! Come on, Deacon! You'n me agin old Satan!"

While these words were being enunciated with infernal distinctness and emphasis the minister stood like one petrified, and then dropped into his seat as though some silent bullet had pierced his heart—the most astonished and horrified person in the room.

Now, while all these things were going on I had been studying the situation, and had reached what proved to be a correct conclusion. Just as poor Doctor Nivens went down I passed up to Dan a slip of paper on which I had penciled my solution of the mystery:

"Professor Grisdale is a master-ventriloquist. He has done all this to interrupt

your lecture. I guess he has beaten you, Dan, but roast him."

Very leisurely Dan closed his manuscript, and removed the gold spectacles from his nose. Then he laid aside the wig of curly hair and the swallow-tail coat. That was as far as he could go, then and there, in restoring himself to natural proportions, for the padding lay deep.

Throughout these deliberate movements there was in his eyes a look not good to see —the shadowing forth of that kind of wrath that does not need to hurry, that never cools before due retribution has been administered.

Fixing his gaze on Grisdale, and speaking in calm and measured tones, Dan said:

"This part of the entertainment is about to close.——After that the lecture will be continued.

"We assembled here for a laudable and lawful purpose. Satan came, also, in the carcass of Professor Grisdale. By the use of ventriloquism and the help of the devil these things have been done.

"As Billy Fish remarked, I may not be much in the way of prayer, but I can cast out devils, and I'm going to do it! Just watch me, and see how it's done!"

With the last word Dan made a rush to the edge of the platform, and sprang toward Grisdale as a tiger leaps upon its prey.

But the wily Professor had calculated everything, even to the manner of his retreat. Before Dan could reach him he was half-way to the door. In passing the stove he lingered by it an instant, and then disappeared into the street.

Dan returned to the platform wearing a look of mingled triumph and satisfaction. Resuming wig and coat, and smartly throwing open his manuscript, he took up the lecture at the point where he had broken off:

"As I was saying when Satan interrupted me, most insects are nearly or quite bald-headed——Ke-choo! Ke-choo! Ke-choo!"

Alas for our village satirist! He had cast out Satan; but Satan had left behind him

something that could neither be cast out nor endured. As we learned afterwards, in passing the stove Grisdale had dropped upon it about an ounce of sulphur and cayenne pepper. In three minutes after his exit the hall was empty. Coughing, sneezing, strangling, the people fled for their lives to the open air, Dan leading the way.

The victory seemed to be with Grisdale, for the moment, but it perched on Dan's banner at last. The Professor had lost caste. He became silent on the over-handled theme of phrenology; we were no longer importuned to buy charts of our heads.

Nevertheless, Grisdale lingered on at The Forks, unaccountably, as we all thought, until it developed that he had designs and hopes concerning widow Cramer. If we disliked him in the character of phrenologist, we learned to fear him in the rôle assumed later; and we had to resort to something stronger than satire to protect the widow against his machinations.

CHAPTER IV.

OLD GEORGE'S DETERIORATION.

When Tom Brimmicom, fresh from the north of Ireland, came to Sydenham Forks it was like putting a portion of vigorous leaven into wheaten batter.

He was young, stalwart, and passing good to look at. He had the easy and polished manners and speech of the best old world society. He was magnetic. He was Irish; and, beyond most Irishmen, had a genius for adventure and misadventure.

Having arrived at The Forks Tom inquired the way and the distance to one George M'Garriger's, and was told that he lived up the East Branch about four miles. There being no public conveyance Tom left his traps to be sent for, and made that last stage of his long journey on foot.

It caused no small flurry in the M'Gar-

riger family when, just as they were sitting down to the noonday meal, a well-dressed young man entirely strange to them came with swinging step up the path that led to their door. Hat in hand he saluted old George, who had met him at the open door, and asked:

"Does Mr. George M'Garriger live here?"

"Yes, I live right here, neighbor. Come in."

Seated in the pleasant dining-room, with the well-spread table in full view, the stranger said:

"I see you were about to sit down to table; but if you will permit it, a part of my errand ought to be done before you do so. When you have heard it perhaps you will let me join you."

"Bless—my—soul, boy! Ye don't need to do any arrant before dinner. Set right up! Yir welcome to sech es we hev. After thet ye kin talk, all ye want to."

"I shall be glad to join you in a few minutes, for I have taken a long walk this morn-

ing, and have a sharp appetite. But before I sit at your table I want you to know who I am."

"My name is Thomas Brimmicom—Tom, for short. I have traveled all the way from County Down, in Ireland, to this spot to find you. If I don't mistake you are my grand-uncle; and if so, I bring you greetings and great news from the Irish branch of your family. Although there has been little if any communication between the American relatives and us, you perhaps know that your mother's grandmother was a Brimmicom; and she is the connecting link between you and me."

While these statements were being made the face of old George underwent some rapid changes, expressing, first, perplexity, then a growing conviction, and, last of all, boundless delight.

Springing to his feet and seizing both hands of the young Irishman, he cried:

"Dod-a-bit, boy! Yir right, an' you've come to the right place! Say, I've got all

that, clean back to my great grandmother Brimmicom, in the old Bible my father brought from York State! Yes-sir-ee! I'm yir uncle George; an' this is yir a'nt Mary; an' these girls are yir cousins Bell an' Debby an' Marget an' Norah—nice girls, too; but bless—my—soul! they're 'fraid o' the young men!

"An' here's my daughter Jane, an' Andy Harris, her husband; ben married nigh upon four year; an' this little man is my grandson Andy George, the newest an' the cutest cousin o' the lot!"

In response to this comprehensive and rapid introduction Tom was as heartily aunted and cousined as he had been uncled. Then Mrs. M'Garriger, taking thought of her duties as hostess, asserted the rights of the dinner-table:

"It wull no be guid manners tae keep ye frae yir dinner, seein' ye've come a' the way frae Ireland tae veesit us, an' hae walkit frae The Foarks the morn. But yi'll no objec' tae a meenute or twa while the lassies

pit a clean claith on the table, an' change the delft; for we werna expeckin' veesitors."

Despite old George's protest, which was urgently seconded by Tom, the thrifty housewife had her way. When they were invited to "sit bye" the table was resplendent with a covering of spotless linen, the newest set of dishes, and some choice dainties, also—not usually included in their plain farmer's dinner.

In the course of the meal Tom imparted some interesting information from over sea. A recent death in the family had brought about a redistribution of fortune. Tom's father had inherited enough to enable him to make Tom a regular allowance of £100 a year; and he had come out to look about him for a while and then settle down to push his fortunes in the new country.

But the most startling news concerned old George himself. A legacy of £10,000 had been left to the oldest male descendant of the great grandmother Brimmicom, and that descendant was, beyond doubt, George

M'Garriger! So much had been rendered probable by enquiries instituted by the legal gentlemen having the management of the estate. Tom was to verify the information, and communicate the result. Then the fortune—colossal for the time and place—would be transmitted to Sarnia, subject to George M'Garriger's order.

How Tom settled down, a welcome guest, with the M'Garrigers, and how he became known in the community and was everywhere sought after, need not be told. But before these chronicles of Sydenham Forks can be closed I shall have to record many things that go to show how like unto leaven was that highly vitalized young Irishman.

The first effect of the coming of Tom Brimmicom was seen in the change that took place in old George; due, I am glad to say, not to personal influence, but to the great change of fortune he announced. Let no man say that he knows himself; or profess what he would or would not do in circumstances as yet by him untried!

Long before the fortune had arrived from Ireland it became evident that, unsuspected by his most intimate friends, perhaps by himself, certain latent elements of the miser slumbered in the character of George M'Garriger. He began to have long fits of abstraction; and would wander apart, muttering to himself and gesticulating, as if he inwardly wrestled with some perplexing problem. At last he unburdened his mind to Tom Brimmicom:

"Dod-a-bit, if I know what to do, Tom! There's all that money—$50,000, you tell me —an' it's got to be took care of. An' thet's what's a-botherin' of me. Say, what do they do with money, in Ireland, when ther's sich a lot of it thet they don't know what to do with it?"

"I dare not give advice, uncle. Everything in this country is so new to me that I might mislead you. The money is your own, to do with it as you please.

"But I don't mind saying what a man in the old country, situated as you are in this, would

do. Being old, and having plenty to live on and to portion his daughters when they marry, he would retire from business. He would sell his land and add the price to the £10,000. He would buy a snug home in or near some pleasant town, and make it in every way comfortable for his own and his wife's old age, and agreeable to his daughters. The large sum remaining he would invest in mortgages on good properties. While waiting opportunities for such investments he would leave his money in the bank for safe keeping."

"Your talk sounds good enough, my boy, but, bless — my — soul, I'm 'fraid on't! S'pose the chap I lent my money to should skip? It's a way them fellers hev in this country. Then what'd I hev fer my good money but the land he couldn't make a livin' out of? Or s'pose the bank broke? It's a way they hev in this country. Where'd my money be? Ye talk like a book, Tom, but I'm afraid on't. Dod-a-bit, but I'll take another week to taste on't, an'

see how I like it. Money's a good thing to hev, Tom, an' a sollum dooty it lays onto a man; I mustn't make no mistakes."

After a week old George renewed the subject. He had been preoccupied every day and restless every night since the previous conversation. But now there was a purpose, born of conviction, looking out of his eyes, as he said:

"Tom, see here, it won't do, nohow! Money's too precious a thing to hev it sunk in any number of acres of the airth; or to hev it busted up in a bank. Ain't there some kind of a strong box, with a key to it, thet they keep money in, an' hev it safe?"

The love of money, never before appealed to in any strength, had quickened at last in old George's nature, and had laid hold of his No. 9 firmness and No. 10+ concentrativeness! It did not need a prophet to foretell mischief; but no one lacking the gift of second sight could have foreshadowed the ghastly and far-reaching mischief that

was to come of George M'Garriger's deterioration.

In answer to his uncle's question concerning strong boxes for the safe-keeping of money Tom told him of his father's iron safe, with a key unlike every other key in the world; and how his father kept therein all his valuable papers and the ready money necessary for current use, and that if the house were to burn down the papers and money in the safe would not be injured. Eureka! That was the solution of his problem toward which the old man had been laboring without being able to reach it.

"Now ye'r talkin', Tom! That's what I'll hev! An' I'll put my money—every dollar of it—into my own safe, an' carry the key myself. Say, Tom, don't ye s'pose I could hev one of them made in Detroit, an' hev it ready agin the money comes from the old country?"

Tom didn't know. But he was quite sure that one could be bought ready-made in that city. When the purchase was determined

on Tom went with his uncle to Detroit, and together they selected a small but well-made safe weighing two hundred pounds, and having a key that delighted old George's heart by its ingenious and intricate workmanship. Tom did not note at the time, though he remembered it afterwards, that the salesman was not only attentive and obliging, but also minutely inquisitive as to the purchaser's name, and place of residence, and the use he had for such an article.

When the notice came that £10,000 had been remitted to the Gore Bank, Sarnia, subject to the order of George M'Garriger, the little safe was in readiness in a corner of old George's bedroom, standing enthroned on a block of walnut which he had sawn and squared and planed to the nicest proportions and finish.

All these proceedings had been carried on with the utmost secrecy, to the end that none of the neighbors should know the whereabouts of the money. I am inclined to think that the first, perhaps the only,

deliberate lie that George M'Garriger ever told was when he gave out that he meant to leave his money in the Gore Bank, on deposit. Certainly the three elements of a lie—an untruth, known to be such, and told for the purpose of deceiving—were involved in that statement.

The expedition to Sarnia, ostensibly to arrange for the depositing of the money, was an event long to be remembered for its thrilling possibilities, and its uneventful outcome. Tom went with his uncle, of course, and carried the brace of pistols he had brought from the old country; for there might be occasion to defend themselves; and, anyway, no well bred Irishman went far from home, in those days, without arms.

The bank officials were pledged in the most solemn manner to always conceal, and never reveal, what disposition was made of the money. Then behind closed doors it was paid over in the identical sovereigns that had come across the sea; for, being unwilling to trust the paper even of the

Bank of England, old George had stipulated for payment in gold.

With his multitudinous god stowed again in the original caskets, and the caskets in a strong leather portmanteau, and that secreted under the seat of the carriage, George and his nephew began the homeward journey, timing it so that they would arrive an hour after dark. It was considered all-important to smuggle the treasure into the house and into the safe unbeknown to every one but the family.

The long drive was beguiled in various ways. At the first, and very copiously—albeit in a subdued voice—old George poured forth his jubilate to the divinity under the carriage seat.

"Say, Tom, did ever ye see the like o' thet heap o' yellow boys? Don't talk to me about mor'gages, an' banks! Thet there shinin' gold is too good to be resked in them things! I'll hev it right where I kin see it every day, an' twenty times a day ef I want to, an' know thet it's all right! An' I'll

take care on't—oh, yes; I'll take care on't—Dod-a-bit, but I will!"

Tom acknowledged that he had never in all his life seen so much gold. But he questioned the wisdom of his uncle's plan for taking care of it. Would the bank officials keep the secret? If it should leak out that he was keeping £10,000 in the house would he be safe from robbery? Were there not several bad characters hanging about The Forks, and up the North Branch?

And, in pure mischief, he reminded his uncle of his own stories of horses stolen and run across the border by Black Dick Douglas, and about systematic smuggling carried on by Pewee, the Potawatomie Indian, and his white accomplices at The Forks, and many other lawless proceedings. Then he wickedly suggested that the peril might declare itself even before they reached home:

"The fact is, uncle, I didn't altogether like the glitter in that cashier's eye when we were counting the gold. Suppose he is

secretly in partnership with Black Dick, and has sent him word that we are taking £10,000 in this open carriage to your home on the East Branch! To be sure, we are two, and have a brace of pistols; but Black Dick might come upon us with half a dozen, and by your account he's a terrible fellow himself. After we have passed The Forks there won't be much danger; but suppose they were to meet us on that lonely piece of road between Babee's Point and The Forks!"

Then Tom took out his pistols to make sure that they were capped and otherwise ready.

The distress of old George was pitiable to the last degree:

"Bless—my—soul, Tom, ye don't think that, do ye? Oh, Tom, to think of all that gold thet they're after! But they shan't hev it, shall they, Tom! You'll shoot, won't ye, Tom! Say, d'ye s'pose thet chap a-horseback thet passed us away back yender wus one of 'em, goin' to warn Black Dick thet we're comin'?"

Tom didn't know, but thought he saw the bulge of a pistol in the fellow's pocket as he passed, and noticed that he looked at them very keenly out of the corner of his eye.

Having passed Babee's Point and entered upon the loneliest part of their journey, old George insisted that they should keep in instant readiness for battle. He held the reins in his left hand and kept his right on a pistol lying in his coat pocket. Tom, likewise, had a pistol convenient to his right hand, for he had not been altogether in fun when depicting the dangers that might beset them.

As they were nearing a sharp turn in the road old George suddenly pulled up the horse and whispered, excitedly: "Here they come, Tom!"

And sure enough, they heard a clatter of hoofs, as of a number of horsemen riding swiftly toward them on a stretch of the road that lay out of sight; for they were in a thickly wooded part of the country. Catch-

ing the advancing sound, Tom's eye kindled for battle.

"Now, uncle," he said, "let's be men! They won't all live to enjoy your gold, if they get it at last. Don't shoot until you have a man covered within ten feet of you. Then spring out and fight with the butt end of your pistol, as I mean to do; and, as Pat Phelan said to his son when the row began, 'Whereiver ye see a head, hit!'—except when it's mine."

As Tom finished, three horsemen galloped into view from around the turn. When they saw before them the carriage with two men in it, each having a cocked pistol in hand pointed toward them, they pulled up so sharply that the horses were thrown upon their haunches.

The misapprehension that threatened to cost some human lives and to betray the golden secret so jealously guarded, lasted only a moment. In the leader of the horsemen old George recognized Jim Blake, the deputy sheriff, who saluted him thus:

"Hello, uncle George! Thet you? From the look of things I s'pose ye took us fer robbers; an' no wonder! This country is jest goin' plum to the dogs. A fine three-year-old colt was stole last night up the North Branch. Folks say it wus Black Dick, an' we're out lookin' fer him; but I'm 'feared he's got acrost the line with the colt."

On learning that George and his friend had driven from Sarnia that afternoon enquiries were made for Black Dick and the colt, but the travelers had seen nothing of them. They were mightily relieved, however, to know that Black Dick was busy getting out of the country with booty instead of lying in wait for them.

The rest of the journey was made in peace; the gold was brought home under the cover of darkness, and transferred to the safe, and no one outside the family knew its whereabouts.

The deterioration toward miserliness of George M'Garriger did not stop while he

lived. In a few weeks after the trip to Sarnia he closed a transaction with his son-in-law, Andy Harris, by which Andy became owner of the M'Garriger homestead, and old George added $2,000 in gold to his hoard.

It was hoped that he would build at The Forks and furnish handsomely in modern style, and thus give his interesting daughters the benefit of his bettered circumstances; but the greed of gold had possessed him. Instead, he purchased for a small sum and put in moderate repair the long-deserted Baldoon House, which stood at a considerable distance from the northern outskirts of the village.

One little room he prepared with barred window and strong door as the hiding place of his safe and its idolized contents. That finished, he established his family in the renovated house, taking Tom Brimmicom as a lodger, at so much per week! On the moving day the safe came after dark, at the bottom of the last load of household goods,

and was handled to its place by Tom and old George.

No one in our community had the faintest suspicion that the Baldoon House contained more wealth than any other private dwelling in the County of Lambton. And I fear that old George enjoyed and chuckled over the unsuspected presence of his divinity almost as much as he did over the daily, sometimes hourly, sight of it, when he went alone into his strong room and, having locked the door, feasted his eyes on the glittering treasure.

Before these chronicles can be finished I shall have to record of George M'Garriger things more amusing and more exciting than any related in this story. But, to me, the sudden breaking down of his soul into utter, sordid miserliness was a tragedy more to be noted than even that later and more ghastly one that grew directly out of it.

CHAPTER V.

A CASE OF BASE DECEPTION.

There came a period when George M'Garriger bethought him a second time of a father's duty toward his unmarried daughters. It was after he began to have a home feeling in his new residence, the Baldoon House; and after the delicious novelty of seeing every day more than $50,000—all in gold, and all his own—had lost a little of its first relish.

Bell was now the senior of the flock of four virgins that remained to him. She was a wholesome, full-bodied, bright-faced, happy-hearted brunette; and she was twenty-two. Looking at her one day, and calling to mind her age, old George shook his head and muttered to himself:

"Dod-a-bit, but this must be seen to! These girls o' mine are so 'fraid o' the

young men thet they're goin' to stick on my hands. First thing I know, I'll hev a houseful of old maids; an' their mother don't seem to care a smitch! Bell must be married off, so's to make way fer the rest."

Accordingly he began to look about him for a suitable match. His experience in Janie's case was not forgotten. He would make a careful selection, and take quiet measures to accomplish his purpose.

At last the old man had a happy thought, and spent a moment or two in despising himself for not thinking it before.

"W'y, bless — my — soul, there's Tom Brimmicom, her Irish cousin, with a £100 a year; an' young an' han'some; an' he ain't took up with any other girl; an' livin' right here in the house! Hooray fer me, this time! There's a ready-made husband fer Bell; an' I'll make it wuth his while to jine up with her, ef it takes £500 fer to do it!"

Thought, resolution, and action followed each other in rapid sequence. With more than his usual prudence George commis-

sioned his wife to sound the mind and heart of Bell, while he undertook to deal with Tom.

It must be recorded to the credit of Mrs. M'Garriger that she protested against parental interference:

"It's no canny, George, tae be pitten oot oor ain han's tae guide maitters that only the Al'wise can unnerstan' an' govern tae a guid feenish. Ye'll min' hoo it wes wi' Janie, an' that ye wrocht naething but ill wi' yir gaeins on tae get her marrit whan, puir lassie, she wes a'ready marrit upon Andy Harris. Tam's a fine sonsie lad, an' oor ain kin. I wad like gey weel tae hae him for a son-in-law; but let their hairts alane, George, tae come thegither, gin they wull, in the wey o' nature, an' no by constrent o' their elders."

But George was masterful; and Mary was persuaded at last to explore, as well as she could, the mystery of a maiden's heart.

"Bell, ma lass, A'm tae tell ye yir faither hes set his hairt on seein' ye marrit upon

Tam Brimmicom. Noo, A' ken es weel's anither that Tam es a pairsonable man; an' able tae plenish a hoose for ye; an' that, in a' probabeelity, he wad make yir life es free o' care an' tribble es a life can be in thes senful warld. But A' ken es weel that the mestery o' the hairt es deep; wha can unnerstan' it? Noo, lassie, yir tae speak free tae yir ain mithir. It wad please me weel tae see yirsel an' Tam gae thegither. But, Bell, gin ye canna tak' yir hairt wi' ye, whativer yir faither an' me may say, dinna gae wi' Tam, nor wi' ony ither man wethoot it."

Bell's face was anything but serene during her mother's discourse. It expressed, at first, a complex of feeling in which alarm and resentment were very conspicuous. Then appeared perplexity of thought, as if she had been put upon an instant choice between the devil and the deep sea. Before her mother had finished, however, something of Bell's usual brightness returned, and she answered with tolerable composure:

"Mother, dear, I think it's too bad of father to act so; and I think it's very nice of you to speak as you have. Oh, dear! whatever shall I do? I wish he had let us alone! Only think, mother, maybe Tom likes some other girl. If he does, and father speaks to him about me, then Tom will have to go. Whatever I might say about marrying him, he's a very nice cousin to have in the house. I'd be sorry to have him leave us, and sorrier still to have to meet him in company as the young man who had declined the honor of being married to me. Oh, mother, can't you make father keep still about it for another week at least?'

Mrs. M'Garriger's sympathy was with Bell, and her will was good enough to silence her husband on that subject for a week and forever. But no grass ever grew under old George's feet when he set out to bring something to pass. Professor Grisdale's hit on his bumps of concentrativeness and firmness was great enough to cover a multitude of misses. The very day of

Mrs. M'Garriger's interview with Bell old George met Tom between Baldoon House and the village, and waylaid him thus:

"Say, Tom, don't ye think it's high time ye wus takin' a wife, an' settlin' down?"

Tom was sure he didn't know, and that he hadn't thought much about it. And for some reason, at that time unknown to his neighbors, Tom blushed like a girl. Unheeding the signal of distress—for he had not perceived it—the old man went on:

"See here, boy, there's my daughter Bell, es likely a girl es there is at The Forks or anywheres, only thet she's so mighty 'fraid o' the young men. Jest you make up to her, Tom. A little o' the right kind o' courtin'll bring her round. Ye don't need to be 'feared o' Mary; she thinks jest es I do about it. Only yisterday she said she'd like to hev ye fer a son-in-law. An', Tom, the day yer married to Bell I'll give ye five hundred o' them gold sovereigns ye saw counted up to Sarnia, an' Mary'll give Bell a good settin' out. What say? Ye couldn't

105092P

better yerself, an' it'll be keepin' the money in the family."

Tom's distress increased with the old man's vehement urgency. When his opportunity came to speak he temporized in a manner suspiciously like that of Bell in answering her mother.

"My dear uncle, you have taken me quite by surprise. I have not dared to dream of such an honor. Bell is good enough for the Prince of Wales! But such matters need much consideration. It is by no means certain that her affections are free, nor that they could be induced to turn toward me, if they were. Give me a little time, uncle. And I must insist upon it that this matter must not be mentioned to Bell by any one but myself."

Old George winked his weather eye, and said, with a satisfied and confident air: "All right; go ahead in your own way, Tom; but go ahead!"

Now, the fact was, as we learned later, that just about the date of old George's happy thought concerning Tom and Bell

something happened that prevented its consummation.

I suppose that up above, where, they say, matches are made, it had been ordained from eternity that Tom Brimmicom and Debby Cramer should meet;—of course, their meeting could have but one result.

I thought then, and I think now, that Debby was in every way as lovely and lovable as it is possible for woman to be. Don't expect analysis, definition, and description of her beauty. I am not good at that sort of thing in any case;—in this, it would be, to me, a kind of profanation that I am not willing to commit.

One general term I may use; she was satisfying. The eye was satisfied with the symmetry and exquisite molding of her form; with the lily-whiteness of her skin; with the heavenly blue of her eyes; and with the manifold nameless graces that

"——played hide and seek,
On brow, and chin, and dimpled cheek,
And in her golden hair."

The heart was satisfied with the evident qualities of her soul, being persuaded that there inhered in her proper self a reality of goodness and lovingness, allied with strength of purpose and reserve of power, sufficient to make one sure that she would not fail to be and do and bear everything required by her conviction of duty.

At this distance of time I can command enough of magnanimity to say with Mary M'Garriger that Tom Brimmicom was "a fine, sonsie, pairsonable young man,"—an altogether suitable mate for Debby. In view of the fact that there are three old men in the world who are bachelors to this day because Debby Cramer could not give her love to either of them, and could not deny it to Tom, the above admission is, to say the least, generous.

The first meeting of Tom and Debby was well calculated to give effect to the will of the Power above that had set them apart for one another.

Tom was returning in his canoe from the

St. Clair flats, whither he had gone to shoot ducks. Debby was abroad that evening on one of her long walks down the river from The Forks. She had wandered farther and later than usual, and on turning homeward came face to face with Peewee, the Potawatomie Indian, and he was drunk.

The place was lonely, and the Indian was in a mood that made it dangerous for an unprotected maiden to meet him. With a leer part savage, part maudlin, and altogether disgusting, he addressed Debby in his nondescript dialect:

"B'sho! B'sho! you wite squaw! Ah bin go to The Forks; an' Ah bin drink plenty, plenty, much good whisky! An' Ah'm go home, to mah place on island, in mah canoe, an' Ah'm take wite squaw 'long to be Peewee's odder wife!"

Then, throwing his voice up about two octaves, and springing forward to seize the "wite squaw," Peewee vented his drunken recollection of a tribal war cry, "Chit-ta-ya-ha-ha-yip!"

Debby had faced the savage bravely enough, looking him squarely in the eye, until that last "yip," and the reaching out of his horrid hands to lay hold of her; then she turned and fled like a frightened deer.

Unperceived by the actors in that stirring scene Tom Brimmicom had landed; and having burst through a fringe of willows that bordered the river, had placed himself between the fleeing maiden and her pursuer. When Peewee found himself confronted by a man his surprise and rage broke out in the snarling expression, "Ta-a-a-ya!"—which I have reason to think is the wickedest kind of Potawatomie profanity, feeling, meanwhile, for the handle of a long hunting knife that stuck in his belt. But Tom's right hand had been trained for emergencies of that kind. It shot straight out from the shoulder, and delivered a blow that made a very good Indian of Peewee for the next hour or two.

Looking over her shoulder as she ran, to

note the whereabouts of her dreaded pursuer, Debby saw the blow struck that laid him low, and paused in her flight. Then, panting, and quivering in every nerve, she approached the spot where Tom still stood over her prostrate foe, and said in snatches:

"Whoever you may be, sir, let me thank you. Oh, what should I have done if you had not come just as you did?"

Tom, also, was agitated, less on account of the fray than by the surpassing loveliness of the trembling young lady. He managed, however, to pull himself together enough to say:

"I count myself fortunate to have been at hand at the right moment. Things don't always happen so. My name is Tom Brimmicom, lately from Ireland, and very much at your service. At present I am living with my uncle, George M'Garriger, whom, possibly, you know."

"Oh, yes; we know the M'Garrigers well, and have heard of you. I am forgetting,

though, that you don't know whom I mean by we;—Mrs. Cramer, of The Forks, is my mother, and I am her only child."

So soon as Debby had ascertained that Peewee was not fatally injured she proposed to set out at once on her return to the village. But Tom raised several objections to that course, all more or less valid and all intended to prolong his intercourse with the beautiful stranger.

"Miss Cramer, the hour is late for so long a walk, and you are in no state for further exertion. Moreover, this Indian, although he is quiet enough now, will revive, and might cause you further alarm. I see but one good way for you, and that is to accept a seat in my canoe. It will be no inconvenience to me; and if it were otherwise I ought to take any trouble necessary to prevent the risks you would run in walking home alone at this hour."

And so it came to pass, at their first meeting, that Debby and Tom got into the same boat and floated off together; which was

prophetic of a longer and more important voyage than that to The Forks.

Why should I go on to tell in detail the sequel of that evening's adventure? Of course, Tom saw in Debby the incarnation of all womanly loveliness. And Debby, without making any sign at the time, shrined Tom in that sacred place reserved in every woman's heart for her manliest man. All which was, doubtless, very sweet for Tom; but to some others, just as worthy of the blessedness as he, it gave a bitter taste in the mouth for the rest of their lives.

And this was the something that happened just about the date of old George's happy thought, as he esteemed it, concerning Bell and Tom, and made the consummation impossible.

When next Bell M'Garriger and Tom were alone together a very interesting but not at all creditable dialogue occurred.

"Tom, I want to say something to you, something very particular, but I don't know how to begin."

"Well, you've made a good enough beginning already. The strangest thing is that I must say something particularly particular to you, and say it soon; and yet my tongue refuses to utter it until the way is cleared, so that you will take me as I mean."

"Oh, Tom, if it's anything sentimental don't say it! For both our sakes, and every sake, don't! But how remarkable! You are afraid to say your say, and I'm afraid to say mine. But, Tom" (relenting), "you may, if you like, give me the tiniest little hint of what you want to say."

"I'm afraid you'd think it very sentimental; but I won't say it—that is, not yet —not until the way is prepared for it. Perhaps, Bell, if you would open your mind to me first, it would be a good thing for both of us."

"I can't and I won't tell you, yet, what I meant to and must, sometime. But since you are my good and loyal cousin I don't mind trusting you with something else—a secret that only two people in all the world

know—*Tom, I'm engaged to Dan Littleton,* and we are only waiting until he gets his appointment as collector of customs at this port to make it known to father and mother and all our friends. There, now; what do you think of that?"

"What do I think of it?" (throwing his cap into the air). "Why, I think it's the best hearing I've had since I left the 'tight little island, the gem o' the say'! No! by the powers, I don't think that, either! What was I saying? Bell, I'll give you confidence for confidence. The very best word I ever heard in all my life was spoken last night by Debby Cramer, when I asked her if I might hope to win her heart!"

"Oh!——Tom!" (her face as sunny as twelve o'clock). "How nice! I guess we can now tell one another those awful 'something particulars.' I know I can tell mine. Tom, father wants you to marry *me!* Did you know?"

"Yes, Bell; I knew; and that was what *I* wanted to tell *you;* and how to do it and

make you understand the impossibility of such a thing without seeming to hold you in light esteem I didn't know. Now everything is clear. You are disposed of to Dan. I will marry Debby Cramer or die a bachelor —so help me! And our nice cousinly relationship will continue. Old Peggy Shaw used to say, when things went to please her, '*Glory be to goodness!*' and so say I."

"And I, Tom, after my mother's fashion, say, '*Thanks be!*' But everything is not clear, Tom. You don't know my father. He'll worry you sick over this plan to marry us to one another. What he'll do to me I can't imagine. I'm afraid it will end in making my life very uncomfortable for a while, and in your banishment from Baldoon."

"It surely won't be as bad as that, Bell. Indeed, I've thought of a way to keep matters quiet, and have everybody well pleased until we shall be ready to declare ourselves."

"That would be just lovely, Tom! How can it be done?"

"Well, suppose—for the sake of peace in the family—we appear to fall in with your father's desire. We needn't fib about it; nor actually make love to one another. But we can be more together than we have been. We can go out walking and canoeing. And, Bell, we can manage, when we go out, to meet the two people we're most interested in, and so give our true love a smoother course than it could have if we were openly resisting your father's will."

"Oh, Tom! you're simply splendid!"

Yes; these abandoned young people settled upon a course of deliberate deception—all for the sake of peace in the family. And they carried it out successfully for a considerable time. Contrary to one's sense of justice, "the world went very well then" —for them.

George M'Garriger was delighted to observe that Tom and Bell were taking to one another. When they went out together for a stroll, or down the river or up the North Branch in Tom's canoe, he would

wink at Mary with infinite glee, and say, "Bless—my—soul, Mary, ain't they gettin' thick? See what a little managin'll do! 'Nuther weddin' on hand, fust thing ye know, old lady!"

The end was stormy. On a day, when pond lilies were at their best, Tom and Bell paddled up the North Branch some two miles in search of—something. Strangely enough, on that same afternoon another canoe bearing two people was propelled in the same direction. When the two parties came together the canoes were made fast, the passengers landed, and proceeded to sort themselves out after a new principle of distribution. Tom took Debby Cramer and strolled up stream. Dan Littleton took Bell and strolled down stream.

All these proceedings took effect, variously, on a solitary beholder who stood on the opposite bank of the river. As Tom and Bell paddled into view his countenance opened in a broad smile of approval, as if his heart were saying, "Bless you, my chil-

dren!" When Dan and Debby joined them, and they all landed, the beholder still smiled benignantly, as if his heart expanded to take them, also, into the scope of his fatherly benediction. But when they proceeded to pair off by some new law of distribution, the smile on his face darkened into a terrible frown, and he hissed from between set teeth and compressed lips, "Dod-a-bit! Thet's it, is it?"

George M'Garriger plodded home from that sight on the river bank well-nigh broken-hearted, muttering as he went: "Bless—my—soul! Wot a desateful jade! ——Irish whippersnapper! Full o' consate! Thinks he's foolin' the old man! I'll start him! Dod-a-bit, but I'll start *him!*"

Tom and Bell came home that evening all unconscious of the pent-up cyclone that awaited them. The family were seated about the table, ready to begin the evening meal, when the supposed lovers came in. Then old George rose up in wrath that would not be controlled and smote them, hip and thigh, with words:

"I seen ye, up at the bend! Yes! Dod-a-bit! I seen ye w'en ye thought ye wus foolin' the old man with yer Deb Cramers an' yer Dan Littletons, an' yer huggin' an' yer kissin'!

"Bell M'Garriger, ye're a desateful, ongrateful hussy! Thet's wot *you* are! But es ye're one o' the fam'ly ye'll hev to stay; an ye're likely to stay a long time. Ye can't bring no Dan Littletons here a-grabbin' fer my money. An' I won't, never agin, turn es much es my little finger to git ye married—no, not ef ye wither up an' blow away out o' my sight!

"Es fer you, Tom Brimmicom, yer room'll be better than yer company to the folks thet live here. Ef ye feel like packin' up yer traps and gittin' out right now, before supper, ye won't be hendered. Yer welcome's wore clean out!"

It was pitiful to hear the old man as he waxed more and more wrathful until his words bolted out singly, detached and hissing, like so many fiery darts.

But they came to a sudden end. Mary M'Garriger, confounded at first, soon caught the meaning of the situation. George's attempt to marry Bell had miscarried almost as disastrously as in Janie's case; and it had driven the young people to practice deception in order to escape his importunities, and to follow their own hearts in peace.

As soon as this light came to her Mrs. M'Garriger rose up from her chair, pale but determined; and stepping swiftly to the head of the table, where old George stood bursting with yet unexhausted fury, she thrust him backward, so that he fell into the seat that was behind him, and said:

"Noo, George M'Garriger, yi'll sit there an' cool yirsel', an' haud yir peace! Gin ye canna, o' yirsel', A'll power a bucket o' cauld water on yir heed! Save's a', man, yir gaen clean daft a' thegither!

"Wae's me! A' wes feart ye wud mak' tribble fer Bell es ye did for Janie. But it's no sae bad yet that it canna be mendit.

Noo, George, seein' yir no fit tae speak for yirsel', A'm gaen tae speak for ye; an' " (shaking her forefinger at him) "yi'll see'n ye mak' guid what I say!

"Bell an' Tam's tae be let alane. Tam can leave ye, gin he must, an' take the wey o' hes ain hairt in peace. But Bell's yir ain child, more's the peety! But she's no tae be misca'd an' pairsecuted because she canna get awa' frae ye, an' she shallna be while her mither's heed is aboon the grun'. An' I houpe Tam 'll hae mair sense than tae tak' ye at yir ill ward the nicht, tae haud it agenst ye, an' agenst us a'."

That was the first time in their married life that Mary had risen up to withstand her husband. He was astonished, and more: he was cowed to the meekness of Moses, and apologized to Tom and Bell for the violence of his language.

The calm that came after the storm was an improvement on any previous state of the M'Garriger family. Bell had peace. Dan Littleton was made free of the house and,

later, won Bell for his bride. Tom Brimmicom, however, sought other lodgings, partly in self-respect, and partly for the good influence he thought it would have on his uncle—to make him feel that his late outrageous conduct was not readily overlooked.

What of Tom and Debby? Much; but that must wait. The chronicles next in order are of mystery, conspiracy and tragedy.

CHAPTER VI.

MYSTERY AT BALDOON HOUSE.

Not very long after Tom Brimmicom left his uncle's family and found other quarters, it began to be observed that the M'Garrigers were looking strangely. Some of us attributed their altered appearance to regret for the well-known unpleasantness that led to the rupture. Others supposed that they sorely missed the presence of that cheerful and witty young Irishman in the home circle. Whatever the cause, the Baldoon family, without an exception, wore a look of distress and alarm, but said nothing in explanation thereof.

When this state of things had continued for several weeks old George came to me, walking hurriedly and otherwise evincing in his manner a state of unusual excitement. When he entered the office he was careful to

close the door after him, and peered about as if he would make sure that no third person were present. Then, in a tone of great anxiety, and omitting his usual "bless—my —soul" greeting, he said: "Neighbor, are we alone?" I assured him that we were quite by ourselves.

"Then, neighbor, I want ye to hear wot I've got to say, an' then tell me wot I'm to do. Ye've heard how the Baldoon House ust to be hanted? Wal, es sure es God, they're at it agin, an' hev ben fer es much es three weeks! I wanted to tell somebody, an' git advice, long ago, only Mary an' the girls wus 'fraid we'd git laughed at. But things hes ben thet bad the last few nights thet they're mighty willin' to hev me come to you now."

This was very startling. Of course we had all heard the ghostly traditions of the house when it was inhabited by the original builder, Mactavish. But that belonged to the distant past. We had come to think that the spirits had followed the Mactavish family,

and would trouble Baldoon no more—Professor Grisdale to the contrary, notwithstanding. Here they were, however, as lively and mischievous as ever; their presence being vouched for by the testimony of Mary M'Garriger and her daughters, to say nothing of old George.

My efforts to draw more definite information out of the old man were not very successful. They only elicited a medley of statements about mysterious lights that flashed through the house, and midnight sounds that could not be accounted for, and invisible powers that rattled and displaced dishes, furniture and the pile of night-wood on the hearth.

Poor old George was too thoroughly dazed with the horrors of the situation to give a satisfactory account of it. So I comforted him with a promise that I would take Tom Brimmicom that afternoon and go out to Baldoon House for a long conference with the family, and that we would counsel them as wisely as we could.

During the walk to Baldoon I questioned Tom concerning the mysterious disturbances in his uncle's house. To my surprise he seemed to know nothing at all about them. Since his rupture with old George he had only visited the family occasionally. He had noticed, as we all had, the signs of trouble of some kind; but he had felt bound to respect their evident wish to keep it to themselves.

Tom's curiosity was kindled to fever heat by what I then told him of the traditions of Baldoon House, and of the renewed manifestations that were terrorizing his uncle's family.

Upon our arrival we were greeted by the entire household with every possible expression of welcome and of gratitude for our visit. Without waiting for us to hear the details, old George proceeded at once to humble himself afresh before Tom:

"Dod-a-bit, Tom, I've ben thinkin' thet mebby the phrenology man wus right about these Baldoon ghosts likin' to stay in

one place; an' thet when them Mactavishes went away the ghosts hed to git out an' stay out o' doors until somebody else would be livin' here, an' would do somethin' mean enough fer to give them the right to come back an' play their infarnal tricks. An' I've ben thinkin', Tom, thet I wus mean enough to you an' Bell fer to throw wide open every door and winder in the house fer the ghosts to come back in. Anyhow, they've got in; an' it seems es ef we'd hev to git out. But, Tom" (the tears running down his cheeks), "ef you'd forgive a foolish old man, an' come back, mebby the ghosts 'd hev to go. Ef ye'll only do it, Tom, it shan't cost ye a cent es long es ye like to stay."

The last traces of Tom's resentment vanished before the old man's self-abasement, and the evident distress of his aunt and cousins. There was an unmistakable twitching about his mouth, and just a show of answering tears in his eyes when he took his uncle's hand and said:

"That's more than enough, uncle. All's

right between us, from this on. In fact, I had made up my mind as we were coming here and I was hearing for the first time the kind of trouble you are in, that I would come back this very night, if you would let me, and join hands with you against ghosts or devils, as they may prove to be, or bad men, who are worse than either."

There was great joy in the M'Garriger home when Tom announced his readiness to return. It seemed to them that with him in the house they could face anything, and could hope for final deliverance.

I, however, was not so sanguine; and requested Mrs. M'Garriger to give us a detailed account of the strange happenings. I want to put it on record, just here, that I believe any statement made by Mary M'Garriger as I believe the verities of the multiplication table. I record this because I could not accept the views of some who were inclined to discount her understanding of the things she described on the grounds of her supposed leaning toward old-world superstí-

tions, and the influence of fear upon her mind. Neither could I force myself into accord with the materialistic theory of the entire episode entertained by Tom Brimmicom and Dan Littleton, who were more closely associated with me in watching it.

Mrs. M'Garriger's account of what had taken place was as follows:

"It was Sabbath nicht, three weeks, that A' seed the fairst o' thae uncanny thengs. A' wes wakit oot o' ma sleep—it wad be near tae the mednicht hoor — wi' a licht shinin' everywhaur, but an' ben, through the hail hoose. It wesna like the sun, nor like a cannle; it wes juist white an' deith-like.

"When A' fairst wakit A' thocht the hoose wes a' in a low, an' cried upon George tae wake an' gae up the stair tae waken the lassies, for A' wes feart they wad be burnt in their beids.

"Then A' gaed oot bye tae see whaur the low wad be. But Lord save's a'! when A' turned tae luik there wesna ony smoke till't,

but only the white, deevlish licht! A' kent weel, then, that it wesna o' thes airth; an' A'm feart, the noo, that it didna come frae heaven.

"As A' luikit the licht lefted frae the lower pairt o' the hoose an' left it a' in dairkness; an' syne it wes in the upper rooms where the lassies sleepit, so that their wundies wes a-blazin' wi' licht as if they had a hunnerd cannels burnin' a' thegither. Then it lefted frae there, a' in a meenute, an' stood a wee while on the roof, an' then it gaed oot. A'm sure it wes no canny.

"Twa nichts aefter that, at the same hoor o' the nicht, we wes a' wakit wi' a soond es o' a man thrashin' on the naked floor wi' a flail. Seven times it struck on the lower floor, an' seven times on the upper floor, an' seven times on the roof, an' aefter that it soonded nae mair. We a' hard it, an' wes sae sair frichtened that we didna daur tae rise.

"Then, twa nichts aefter that, at mednicht, there cam' a gret ruction a' through

the hoose. The nicht-wood that George hed pitten in a pile on the hairth wes petched hither an' yon, frae end tae end o' the room, for a' the warld es if the ghaists wes peltin' ane anither wi' the sticks. An' the delft wes rattled oot o' place on the shelves, an' some wes crackit, an' some wes broken a'thegither. An' syne, ivery beed in the hoose wes lefted up by the feet, the maitter o' ten or twal enches, an' let fa' wi' a gret thump that shook the hoose frae bottom tae top. Then the chairs an' the tables, the pans an' the pots, an' ivery loose theng in the hoose wes shefted an' shoved aboot wi' a gret noise.

"A' micht gae on, an' gae on, an' then gae on agen, telling ye a' the deevlish thengs thae evil sperits hae deen tae us wha niver did hairm tae them. Ae nicht it's the uncanny low, that's liker hell-fire than onything else; anither it's the flail on the floor; anither it's the tummelin' aboot o' ivery loose theng in the hoose. An' through it a' we hevna seen the form o' ony man, or

angel, or deevil; nor hev we heard ony voice forbye oor ain when we cried oot wi' fear. But whaever it es they're verra regular in their visits. They aye gie a nicht o' rest between ivery twa o' fricht.

"Noo, gin ye men that are scholars can tell us the intairpretation o' thae gaeins on, an' hoo they may be brocht till an end, we'll a' be mair than thankfu' tae ye. For gin we canna get deleeverance, an' that richt airly, we maun flee frae thes evil hoose es the Mactavishes did, or be carried oot o' it, deid o' the fear an' the weariness o' the flesh tae bear it."

Silence, deep and long, followed Mrs. M'Garriger's narrative. The family waited for Tom and me to speak in solution of the mystery, and to suggest some way of deliverance. But I was by no means ready to speak. The case was altogether beyond me. If Mrs. M'Garriger had rightly conceived and correctly reported the things she saw and heard, this was a call to stand up and wrestle not with flesh and blood but with

wicked spirits of unknown powers; and it must not be undertaken lightly.

And I thought Tom's eyes expressed something of skepticism as to any superhuman agency in the matter, and a stern purpose to detect and punish the real culprits. I therefore judged it best to avoid present discussion, and suggested, for the immediate encouragement of the fear-stricken family, that Tom should return to them at once; that Mrs. M'Garriger, knowing the One Being who could protect her against infernal powers, should cry to Him; and that Tom should come to my office every afternoon and report the state of things at Baldoon, so that, after further observation, we could together decide upon the cause and the cure of their trouble.

These suggestions were accepted gladly, by all parties concerned, as a working policy for our first operations.

I am sorry to say that Mrs. M'Garriger did not confine herself to my recommendation. Perhaps she did not conceive my

meaning. Certainly the measures she took the next morning and the night following it were anything but those I intended. She made a cross of witch hazel and nailed it over her front door, and in the center of the sill of her back door she fastened a horseshoe. That, and much more that was very lamentable, Tom told me in his second report.

"When my aunt placed a cross on guard at one door, and a horseshoe at the other, I only smiled at what seemed a bit of harmless superstition. But I felt a good deal of shame and anger at what she did last night, for which the morning's work was only a preparation.

"My room opens into the sitting room, into which open both the outside doors—front and back. Last night being the regular ghost's night, I was on the watch for what might occur.

"About eleven o'clock, when it was supposed that all in the house were asleep, my aunt came into the sitting room in her bare

feet, but otherwise dressed in her usual garments, put on wrong side out.

"Taking her stand midway between the outside doors, and clasping her hands above her head, she faced, in turn, toward each angle of the house, saying at the first, 'In the name of the Father,' at the second, 'In the name of the Son,' at the third, 'In the name of the Holy Ghost,' and at the fourth her voice rang out as in a battle cry:

'Witch or warlock, ghost or Deevil,
I defy your powers o' evil:
Muckle Hornie cudna force you
'Neath the cross, nor o'er the horseshoe!'

"Then she went back to her room, and, I suppose, to bed.

"An hour later, as if in scorn of her defiance, the flail threshed its seven strokes each upon first floor, second floor, and roof, in succession. A little after an extra number was added to the night's program in the shape of a storm of leaden bullets that crashed through the windows and fell rat-

tling on the floor. We gathered fifteen of them this morning.

"As soon as the flail began to thresh I ran out of my room, pistol in hand; but there was nothing to be seen. When the shower of bullets came I rushed out into the yard, quite prepared to see some one skulking away, for it was good moonlight; but there was no sign of any one, neither had there been any report of firearms to account for the bullets. They must have been hand-thrown."

Dan Littleton was present at this, and at every subsequent meeting held in my office for the solution of the Baldoon mystery. He was a keen fellow, was interested in the M'Garriger family, and had now become a person of importance in our village as collector of customs. I thought it well to add him to our number. When Tom finished his report Dan demanded of him:

"Well, Tom, what do you make of all this?"

"I do not make anything of it—yet. I've

no idea that either 'Witch or warlock, ghost or Devil' is doing these very devilish things. We can only watch and wait. But, Dan, when I get to the fellows that are working this, they'll need the benefit of clergy, mighty quick!"

Dan was of the same opinion, and hoped he might have a hand in preparing some of the said persons for the clergy. And he electrified us by saying that already certain nebulous suspicions in his mind were gravitating into something very like a theory, which, if it proved correct, would put us in the way of casting the Devil out of the M'Garriger home, and of sticking one of his wing-feathers into the cap of the new Collector of Customs. We all agreed, however, that further observation was necessary; and arranged to meet every afternoon to study the problem in its latest developments.

Mrs. M'Garriger's next measure to obtain relief was equally unsuccessful with the first.

The strange doings at Baldoon had now

been blazed abroad everywhere. Many were the callers from near and from far; some being prompted by mere curiosity, others by neighborly sympathy, and yet others by a desire to try their 'prentice hands at laying ghosts or casting out the Devil. For it was the general belief that such mysterious and terrifying manifestations could be caused by no other agencies than either the ghostly or the Satanic. And there were not a few people in our community who were ambitious to test their powers as exorcists.

Among others came Mrs. Gawley, an old-time Scottish crony of Mary M'Garriger's. Having heard everything that had happened up to date, Mrs. Gawley upbraided her friend for not calling in some "man o' God" to pray in the house.

"Ye ken weel, Mistress M'Garriger, hoo it wes in the days o' the Apostles—hoo men o' God hed pooer tae gar the evil sperits be subjec' tae them.

"Noo, there's yir neebor, Jock Richard-

son, A'm hearin' that he wes an elder o' the kirk in Glaisgie. Hoo es it ye dinna ask him tae come an' pray yir hoose frae under the rule o' Satan?"

"Es sure es deith, Mistress Gawley, gin Jock Richardson wes tae face the sperits thet's in thes hoose, ye wadna gie a bawbee for a' they'd leave o' him. A' doot he's no the kin' o' man o' God they'd respec'. They'd deal wi' him es the seven sons o' Sceva wes dealt wi' that tuik in han' tae conjure wi' a name that they didna ken verra weel theirsel's, but said tae the evil sperit, 'In the name o' Jesus, whom Paul preacheth, we adjure thee!' Yiv read, Mistress Gawley, hoo he leapit upon them, an' drove them oot, wounded an' bleedin'.

"A'm thenkin', Mistress Gawley, that our Baldoon sperits wud scorn such a thraun kin' o' a Chrestian es Jock Richardson; they'd speer in dereesion, 'Wha are ye?' an' syne, they'd mak' wey wi' him a'thegither."

"Losh keep's a', Mistress M'Garriger! what gars ye speak sae o' a man that's

been, es A'm tell't, ane o' the pellars o' the kirk?"

"A pellar o' the kirk, said ye, Mistress Gawley? Gin it be sae, he's a fa'en pellar, the noo; an' no muckle better than a *caterpellar!* Dinna ye ken, yirsel', that he wes at the Coutts' dance but thes nicht three weeks, an' that no man there wes sae licht o' heels es yir *pellar o' the kirk?*"

"Weel-a-weel, wumman! Didna King David, the man aefter God's own hairt, dance?"

"Yes, Mistress Gawley; King David, the man aefter God's own hairt, danced; *but it wesna before Betty MacDonald!*"

For like reasons Mrs. McGarriger declined to consider other suggested intercessors beside Jock Richardson. She was something fastidious, no doubt; but the case was unique and exacting. She had come to feel a kind of pride in the prowess of "oor Baldoon sperits." In her way of thinking it would take a veritable David to cope with these Goliaths.

Her choice settled upon a man of undoubted piety—the Reverend Solomon Weldon—a Methodist circuit rider whose parish included the entire of two counties.

Having heard the tale of mystery and fear Mr. Weldon expressed unquestioning belief in the superhuman origin of the trouble, and confidence in the power of prayer to bring divine relief. He further comforted Mrs. McGarriger by telling of similar disturbances that had taken place, nearly a hundred years before, in the Epworth Parsonage, England, when it was the boyhood home of John Wesley, the venerable founder of Methodism.

The service for exorcism was everything that such a service could be made. Mr. Weldon was supported by Uncle Nat Parmlee and other doughty Christian heroes. Passages of Holy Writ bearing upon the situation were read and expounded — beginning with the incantations of the Witch of Endor, and ending with the sorceries of the Scarlet Lady of the Apocalypse.

Hymns were sung—in the spirit and with the understanding, also—that inspired faith in a name

"High over all
In hell, or earth, or sky;"

and possessed such power that

"Angels and men before it fall,
And Devils fear, and fly!"

Then prayer was offered by men to whom prayer was the breath of spiritual life.

But the only good effect of that memorable service was a lasting religious impression made on the members of the M'Garriger family. The ghosts seemed to be provoked by it to an excess of naughtiness.

Tom's report of the night which followed the attempted exorcism was more alarming than any he had yet made.

"You remember the bullets that were thrown through the windows? Well, Aunt Mary marked each one of the fifteen with a cross, and walked out to the river and threw them into ten feet of water.

"You'll find it hard to believe—my own brain is all through other with it—but last night, while the supper was cooking, there came crashing through the new glass that Uncle George had put into the sashes *those same fifteen bullets*, each bearing the sign of the cross! I ran out, hoping to lay hands on the thrower, but no one was in sight.

"Half an hour later there came from the kitchen, where my aunt was preparing supper, a startled cry mingled with a strange hissing sound, followed instantly by a rolling cloud of steam and ashes. We rushed to the spot to find my aunt on the floor in a dead faint. The kitchen was literally filled with steam and floating ashes. The fire on the hearth was nearly quenched, and the potatoes that had been cooking in a large pot were lying some among the brands and embers, and others far out on the floor. When my aunt recovered from her swoon she told of what had occurred in a faint and discouraged voice:

"'A' wes juist bidin' anither meenute

while the taties in the muckle pot wud be cookit, an' A' wes luikin' fair at the pot hangin' aboon the low on the hairth, when—Lord keep's a'!—it wes tippit bottom up, an' wes held sae, lang eneuch for a' the water an' a' the taties tae rin oot intae the fire, an' then it turnt back es it wes! Yill believe it noo, Tom, that we're bein' pair-secutit in thes hoose frae the bottomless pit; for the han's that tippit the muckle pot wes no veessible tae mortal een; an' they'll be tae be weel acquent wi' fire, tae reach intil't like yon, an' tak' plenty time tae wark their meeschief.'

"After a miserable supper—Bell being up in her room, and the other girls in the kitchen—there came, all at once, a triple alarm of fire. We who were in the sitting room saw tongues of flame issuing from between the north window casing and the wall. Bell screamed down the stair, 'Tom! Tom! my room is on fire!' And the other girls came running in from the kitchen, crying, 'Come quick, somebody! the kitchen floor is burn-

ing!' The fires were all seen in time to put them out easily; but the sense of danger from invisible and undiscoverable causes became a torment without remedy.

"At the usual time we retired; not, however, to rest and sleep. From twelve o'clock we had, condensed into one, the several midnight programs which, hitherto, had been given separately. The light flashed. The flail sounded. The ruction with furniture, dishes, pots and pans was repeated with greater fury than ever. After that there was peace; and a little before daylight our overwrought nerves quieted down to the slumber point.

"Now, gentlemen, hear me. The time has come when something must be done. I confess myself beaten — not convinced. Some human blackguards are doing these things. Who they are, and why and how they do them, are questions quite beyond me. Meanwhile, my uncle's people are suffering past endurance. Bell, in particular, is losing her nerve altogether. I

wouldn't answer for her life if she's to suffer another week under the excitements and alarms that prevail at Baldoon.

"Dan, you said the other day that certain suspicions of yours were gravitating into a theory. In God's name, give it to us as it is! If we can strike the right parties and win relief, well and good. If not, my uncle's family must leave that accursed house at once."

There was a promising glitter in Dan Littleton's eyes during Tom's last utterances, and he took up the subject, promptly, where Tom had dropped it:

"The house is no more accursed than you are, Tom. I agree, however, that we should act at once, and with vigor. I could not have said as much yesterday; but since last night, I have been ready to strike. Let me give you, in brief, my theory and my plan of action.

"I believe that smuggling has been carried on in this quarter since before Mactavish and his clansmen built their first houses. I think

the smugglers found the Baldoon House an inconvenience and a danger to their trade, because it was inhabited by an honest family. I think they came to see that it would become not only safe for them, but also a convenience, if it were permanently deserted and shunned.

"You will see the point of this when you call to mind the nearness of Baldoon House to a little lagoon that connects at one end with the North Branch, and at the other with Channel E'Carte and the St. Clair River. It may not be known to you that a canoe can be paddled through that lagoon from the North Branch to the St. Clair, and so on to Algonac, or any other convenient Michigan port.

"I'm not quite sure that nature fully prepared that secluded byway for smugglers. From recent observation I am inclined to think that certain reaches of it have been improved by the midnight labor of man.

"Well, Baldoon House, inhabited, was a danger, uninhabited, a convenience to the

smugglers; and it is my belief, gentlemen, that it has never been troubled by any other ghosts than smugglers. They frightened the Mactavishes away, and gave the house a reputation so evil that, for years, no one cared to live in it. Now they have undertaken to rout the M'Garrigers in the same way."

Here I thought it well to break in on the speech of this decidedly clever young man. I reminded him that Tom Brimmicom had been on watch for several nights, that he had seen and heard many marvelous and unaccountable things, and had confessed himself beaten. Then, in some heat, I asked him how he accounted for the mysterious light that flashed, the invisible flail that threshed, the marked bullets that were fished out of the muddy bottom of the river, and thrown a second time through the windows, and all the rest of it, if the agency were merely human.

But Dan was in an impetuous and masterful mood, and answered me accordingly:

"I don't undertake to account for these things, now. Ask me later, when there is more time to study their tricks. But I *am* going to put a stop to them — right now! And here, gentlemen, are the documents that will do it."

Thereupon Dan laid upon the table sworn informations against four men of shady reputation — Peewee, the Potawatomie Indian, of Walpole Island, Black Dick Douglas, Tonc Le Roux, and an American, supposed to be confederate with these, named Julius Heyward, whose home was on the Michigan side of the St. Clair River, near Algonac.

"On these papers," said Dan, "I can have the men arrested, and can hold them long enough to show whether or not they are the ghosts that haunt Baldoon.

"To-morrow night is the regular ghost's night; but they will fail to connect. I shall send to the island to-night and take Peewee. Before to-morrow night I shall have the two Canadians in hand—for I will

sweat Peewee until he will be glad to tell me where they may be found. The Yankee may not be on our side of the river. But, with three of the four in confinement, I'll go bail that no ghosts will disturb Baldoon to-morrow night. It may be impossible to prove any punishable offense against these men, but we'll find out the mystery of Baldoon, or I'm a Potawatomie!"

"Yes, Dan," said Tom, looking grim, and speaking in a terrible voice, "and if it prove as you think, and I hope, we'll find out who to make ghosts of if there's any more deviltry at Baldoon."

Pursuant to Dan's plan of campaign, Peewee was arrested that night and brought over to The Forks.

He proved, however, as subtle as . . . an Indian. He pretended utter ignorance of the whereabouts of the other three suspects, and denied having taken part in smuggling operations. Meanwhile, Peewee's squaw spent the night in finding Black Dick and Tonc Le Roux, to whom she gave such a

warning as caused them to disappear before daylight; and the place which had known them so long and so sorrowfully has known them no more unto this day.

Whether it was a mere coincidence or something else, it is a fact that with the disappearance of Black Dick and Tonc Le Roux the mystery of Baldoon came to an utter end.

Dan and Tom were jubilant, of course; and so was I, for that matter. But they exulted over me, more than was seemly, because the outcome appeared to justify their altogether materialistic theory of the case.

Out of the wing of the Devil he cast out—to use his own words—Dan Littleton won two feathers for his cap. One was the warm commendation of the Minister of Customs for having broken up a nest of smugglers. The other was the hearty approval of George M'Garriger as a suitor for the hand of his daughter Bell.

What do I think of it all, now? Well, I

hardly know. Baldoon House has long since vanished from the earth. I don't mean that it disappeared in a sudden and mysterious way, but only that it went out by littles, as do all things left to the unresisted ravages of decay. In candor I must acknowledge that after Dan Littleton's exorcism there was never any word of ghosts in that house.

And yet, as I call to mind—after nearly forty years—the testimony of honest Mary M'Garriger, and the fearless and most thorough investigation made by Tom Brimmicom, and his confession that, being on the spot at the time of the occurrences, he could not connect them with human agency, I am confounded.

I simply tell the story, and leave others to solve a problem too hard for me—whether Dan Littleton or the Reverend Solomon Weldon exorcised the evil spirits that once haunted Baldoon House.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST PROF. GRISDALE.

A great sigh of relief swept through The Forks, and far up both branches of the river, when it became known that the ghosts had ceased to trouble the M'Garriger family.

The tension had been great—to the degree of positive pain and panic. People had been able to think and speak of little else for a whole fortnight. Pilgrimages from twenty, thirty, and even forty miles away had been made to the scene of the mystery; much to the annoyance of the Baldoon household, already tried to the utmost of their powers of endurance by that which was transpiring within their gates.

But now all that had come to a happy end, and people were again free to think of themselves a little—also, of one another.

The first use Tom Brimmicom made of

his permanent relief from the ghost-watch was to visit Mrs. Cramer, and propose, in due form, for the hand of Debby. He was approved by that lady, and accepted as her future son-in-law, with a heartiness that quite took his breath away, notwithstanding his great love for Debby.

The question was raised in Tom's mind: "Why should a mother of Mrs. Cramer's wealth and distinction be so ready, not to say eager, to marry her daughter to one who is comparatively a stranger, and has only his allowance of £100 a year?"

Moreover, being keenly sensitive to all the proprieties of life, Tom had noted and resented something in her manner not quite normal in a well-bred lady-mother when listening favorably to such a proposal as his,—a look of positive triumph, and a scarcely delicate suggestion that she would not object to any date for the marriage that the lovers might choose, however early.

The explanation of the peculiarities in Mrs. Cramer's manner of receiving his suit,

which had so greatly puzzled Tom, came very soon; and had the effect of restoring her to the place she formerly held in his esteem. It also kindled in his chivalrous nature a great pity for her condition, and was the means, unintentionally on the part of every one concerned, of bringing his life into jeopardy.

Debby Cramer had a way of bidding her lover good night at the hall door which was very sweet to him, so much so that he came to look forward to it as the choicest of the wine reserved for the last of the feast.

On such an occasion, not long after Tom was accepted and made free of the house, Debby, in parting at the door, said, "Tom, are you engaged for to-morrow afternoon?" Very deliberately, and with a delicious laugh, Tom answered, "Yes, Debby; I am. I'm engaged for to-morrow afternoon, and to-morrow forenoon, and all the to-morrows of the everlasting future, to the sweetest,"—but something cut short his honied speech with a vastly superior sweetness,

something not too loud for discretion, and covered from all alien eyes by the friendly dark.

"Well, then, I want you to take me out in your canoe for a long afternoon on the water. I have a new and great trouble that I want to confide to you, now that you're one of the family."

The communication made by Debby that day was long and serious, and led to grave results. In the kind of dialogue they used it took all the afternoon; it amounted, in fact, to a biography of Mrs. Cramer up to that time. It would make good enough reading, and would exhibit Debby in one of the finest phases of her altogether fine nature, her love for her beautiful mother—a love that was literally blind to certain innocent but perilous weaknesses of character in its object. But dearly as I would like to give it in full I must forbear. Condensed to almost absolute solidity it was, in substance, as follows:

When Mrs. Cramer was Deborah Dean

and twenty years old, living in the home of her parents on the coast of Maine, she was coerced into a loveless marriage with Andrew Cramer, a prosperous lumberman of twice her age. Very reluctantly she bowed to their will; for there had been a secret attachment between her and Horace Bristol, a young sailor, then absent on a long voyage; but she yielded at last.

When the sailor came home there had been one short interview, full of agony to both, and then they had parted, presumably, forever.

Cramer failed in business, in the East, and a new beginning of life was made in the wilderness of western Canada, wherein he was loyally supported by his wife.

Soon after he had amassed a second fortune in the lumbering business, Andrew Cramer died, leaving his widow and Debby, then ten years old, well provided for.

Mrs. Cramer had decided to live out the rest of her days at The Forks, partly because a portion of the estate consisted of

valuable realty not readily to be converted into its equivalent in money, and partly because she had made some warm friends in the place.

So much of the history of the Cramer family is necessary to an understanding of what came of the revelations made to Tom that afternoon.

Debby's trouble concerning her mother, however, was of a date as recent as the coming of Prof. Grisdale.

Mrs. Cramer had been quite interested in the lectures on phrenology, and specially so in the doctrine that every one should have a chart of his own head and live by it. When Dan Littleton so pitilessly satirized the Professor's pretensions in that line she was indignant and immediately took Debby with her to the phrenologist's rooms and ordered two of his best, at $2 each.

What began on that occasion, and continued for some weeks after it, let Debby tell, in her own way.

"After that horrid old Professor had

finished my chart he began with mother. I noticed that he was long about it, and seemed to make more motions around her head and before her face than seemed necessary. At one time he set the ball of his fat old thumb just between her eyes, and took one of her hands in his other hand and held her so for a long time, while he talked of the bumps along the lower part of the forehead, and explained what he called the ulnar nerve.

"When he sat down to write the chart mother looked drowsy, and sat like one dazed until he took her hand again at our coming away; then she brightened up.

"It hurts me, Tom, to tell you the rest, but you can't help me unless you know everything about it. From that afternoon the Professor has had a strange influence over mother. She has always been thought exclusive, even over-particular, as to her associates; but she has allowed that disgusting man to call, and has made him welcome. And they meet away from the house

and take long walks together. She is so wrapped up in him that she won't hear the least word against him. Tom, I'm afraid, sometimes . . . that he is determined to marry her for the sake of her money, and that she won't be able . . . to refuse him. Oh, it would just break my heart!"

And then Debby wept as if her heart were already broken with the bare thought of such a thing. At last she regained control of her feelings, and went on:

"There, Tom; the worst is out. What do you think of it? Can't something be done to save my beautiful mother from that horrid man?"

Tom did not tell Debby, at that time, all he thought. But he comforted her greatly by his answer to the last question: "Yes, my dear, something and everything necessary can be, and shall be, done to prevent your mother and her fortune from falling into the hands of that unprincipled adventurer, Grisdale."

Tom's keen eye saw to the muddy bottom

of the affair. Mrs. Cramer was weak at certain points. She was very impressionable. Grisdale was more and worse than a wandering lecturer for a silver collection at the door. He was a hypnotist, without a grain of honor in his make-up. He had obtained control of Mrs. Cramer's mind through her highly susceptible nerves. And, doubtless, the two had already come to an agreement about marriage. That would explain Mrs. Cramer's unseemly readiness to give Debby to himself at an early date—it was in order that she, being settled in a home of her own, would no more have any right to object to her mother's union with the Professor.

As the result of this swift working of his thoughts through the problem Tom swore very solemnly, to himself and his Maker, that he would never fix a day for his own complete happiness with Debby until he saw Mrs. Cramer released from the power of Grisdale.

The next day Tom called a meeting of the

Council of Three—so we had named ourselves during the reign of the ghosts—Dan Littleton, himself, and myself. Having pledged us to strict secrecy, he made known Debby's revelation and his own understanding of the case.

"And now," Tom continued, "we have on our hands a matter as urgent as was the disenchanting of Baldoon, and, if I don't mistake, vastly more difficult. But, by hook or crook, or by both, or by anything else that will answer the end, I am bound to prevent a marriage between that sleek humbug and Mrs. Cramer!"

I sought to temper a little Tom's Irish blood, which was getting dangerously hot. I agreed that Grisdale was a worthless adventurer, and was evidently using hypnotic influence on Mrs. Cramer to secure by marriage with her a comfortable nest for himself in his old age. Then I pointed out how impossible it would be to prove and, legally, interdict the practice of hypnotism. While the professor paid his bills and

abstained from the crimes forbidden in law he could not be touched. If Mrs. Cramer chose to associate with him, and even to marry him, there was no way of preventing it.

But my well-meant cautions produced an effect the opposite of that I desired. I could see gathering in Tom's face, also in Dan's, the portents of a storm that might end disastrously.

Tom broke out with great vehemence, "Sir, it is little less than blasphemy to say that a thing that ought to be done can't be done! This villainy ought to be stopped! As sure as God is God it will be, I don't care who says can't!"

Though Dan had said little, as yet, his face showed that he was thinking hard; and his dark hazel eyes blazed with suppressed excitement. Answering Tom's passionate words, he said:

"Yes, Tom, it ought to be stopped, and it shall be; but how? We have no easy job on our hands. I suggest that we take twenty-

four hours to think through this thing separately, and that we meet again to-morrow afternoon to compare results. Out of the three plans we shall have developed we ought to be able to select enough of available wisdom to circumvent the old fox. And Tom, find out from Debby Cramer whether that old-time lover of her mother's, Horace Bristol, is alive; and, if so, where he is, and whether he is yet a bachelor. I'll tell you why to-morrow."

The next afternoon Tom brought us some information about Horace Bristol. He was alive three years ago. After his bitter disappointment he had made one more voyage and then had gone to California. He had returned from the gold fields to Kennebunkport, Maine, a very rich man, and a bachelor. That was all Debby knew of him.

When we came to the matter of plans for preventing the marriage, it was found that two of us had made no advance whatever. As for me, I could only say as before:

[redacted]

You'd get your own nose out of joint with Mrs. Cramer; the Professor might shoot you; anyway, it's against the law and the public sentiment of this country.

"But I think I can submit a plan that will do quite as well.

"Grisdale must be separated from Mrs. Cramer for a considerable time, so that his power over her will be weakened by distance, and by failure to renew it.

"When she is herself again, if it can be managed, her first lover—this Horace Bristol of Maine—must come forward once more and try to wake her heart to its early love for him. If I'm not in error he'll find that no difficult thing to do; at all events, the hope of a permanent deliverance lies in that direction.

"Now, as to methods. It shall be your part, Tom, if you will consent, to go East and find this man Bristol. Should he satisfy your mind as a man and future father-in-law, and prove to have any lingering fondness for the lady in question, you must

bring him here as fast as cars and coaches can carry you.

"In the case of Grisdale I must do a thing that will expose me to criminal prosecution. That shall be my part in the conspiracy. I think, however, that when we have Mrs. Cramer safe under the wing of Horace Bristol I can persuade the Professor that it won't pay him to prosecute, and that it will pay him to fold his tent and steal away from these parts, for good.

"No; I won't tell either of you what I mean to do with Grisdale. It might bring you into unnecessary trouble. But on the same night that Tom leaves for the East the Professor will mysteriously disappear from The Forks, and will be kept away from Mrs. Cramer until we know whether or not there is any help in Horace Bristol.

"And now, gentlemen both, if we adopt this plan there must be absolute secrecy. No one but ourselves and Debby Cramer must know or even suspect what will have become of Tom and the Professor."

After laboring long and hard to dissuade Dan from undertaking anything contrary to law, we yielded to him. The conspiracy against Prof. Grisdale, out of which undreamed of complications and perils were to be evolved, was matured and formally entered into by the several parties thereto.

The third night after our plans were settled Tom Brimmicom, supposed by the M'Garrigers to have gone to bed at ten o'clock, stole out of his bedroom window, and began his long and secret journey to the State of Maine.

It had been arranged that Dan and Debby and I would rally to the support and comfort of Mrs. Cramer in the affliction we anticipated she would suffer through the unaccountable disappearance of Tom and the Professor. But since the working out of the conspiracy got tangled up with other and more serious matters, it is as well to say just here that before the sun went down on the first day of their absence we all had as much

need of counsel and support as had Mrs. Cramer.

And, since Dan was glad to confide to me, the next day after his exploit, the secret of how and where he had disposed of the Professor, I judge this is the proper place for the account of it.

When he undertook to spirit Grisdale away Dan turned for help to a band of pagan Potawatomies, settled on an Indian reserve on Walpole Island, which is in the St. Clair River, about six miles from The Forks. He had a genius for managing Indians; and this particular band were under obligation to him for repeated kindnesses in the way of looking after their business with the Indian Agent at the annual distribution by the government of blankets and money.

Dan sent for Sogosca, the chief of the Potawatomies, and made him understand that he wanted a favor that would involve some risk; and that he would not let the Indians get into any trouble with the law for doing it.

There was, he said, a bad white man at The Forks—a fox—that was so cunning that his mischief could not be stopped by the white man's law. He wanted him taken away in the night, and kept a good while—maybe one moon, maybe two—where no one but the chief and his band could find him. He was not to be hurt, but only to be kept there to stop him from doing harm to one of Dan's friends; and the Indians would be well paid for the service, and for the food the bad white man would eat. Dan, himself, would let the chief know when to let him go, and would protect the Indians against the white man's law.

Sogosca was willing, even eager, to do the required service for Dan, the Potawatomies' good friend. In some subtle way it was so managed that the Professor spent the evening on which Tom effected his secret departure at a house on the western outskirts of the village, and wrote a dollar chart. He left the house to return to his lodgings about ten o'clock; and that was the

last that was ever seen of Prof. Grisdale at The Forks!

The rush of events that followed immediately after left the public no time to miss either Tom or the Professor, nor to speculate on the causes of their absence, before a new and ghastly occurrence—with which they had nothing to do—suggested a theory of their disappearance as wide of the truth as it well could be. But that belongs to another part of the story.

It is enough for the present purpose to say that on the way to his lodgings the Professor was seized by five stalwart Potawatomies and bound and gagged and hustled into a large canoe so quickly and quietly that before he realized what was going on he was being paddled swiftly toward the place of his destined captivity.

At the south end of Walpole Island, in a sort of cabin—half house and half wigwam —far removed from any other human habitation, and closely guarded day and night, the astute Grisdale had time to meditate on

many subjects while Tom was making his journey to the East in search of a man, and returning again.

On the night of their departure some other things were done which declared themselves the morning after with an emphasis that threw every one into a state of panic,—the conspirators, most of all. These things must be told, however, as an interlude that came between the inception and the culmination of our benevolent conspiracy in the interest of Mrs. Cramer.

CHAPTER VIII.

TRAGEDY AT BALDOON.

"Tom Brimmicom has been ten hours on his journey to Maine; Prof. Grisdale has been for the same length of time in the hands of Dan Littleton's bravos, whoever they are, and is now sequestered in some place unknown to any one but his captors; and all but three of the dwellers at The Forks are totally ignorant of the fact that these two important citizens have mysteriously disappeared."

So my thoughts ran on, pleasantly enough, as I sat in the office at eight o'clock in the morning of the day that was to be the beginning of Mrs. Cramer's emancipation from the hypnotic spell cast upon her by Grisdale. And they continued, thus:

"Perhaps at this very moment the landlady is rapping on the Professor's door to

warn him out to breakfast. . . . At M'Garriger's it is possible that old George is just now calling to Tom, whom he supposes to be sleeping late: 'Bless—my—soul, boy, it's eight o'clock, an' the breakfus' is nigh ready! Hadn't ye better be turnin' out?'

"What a surprise is waiting in each case! No Professor! No Tom! What will they think? What will they do?"

At that point the current of my thoughts was suddenly and rudely changed. Dan Littleton, wild with excitement, burst into the office and, without greeting of any kind, cried to me:

"Have you heard that George M'Garriger has been murdered?"

"George M'Garriger? Murdered?"

"Yes! The poor old man is dead! murdered! robbed! They say he was found in his strong room. There was something, too, about his having kept a safe there with all his money in it,—his Irish fortune, you know, with other money he had put with it. The word is that he was found this morning

in that strong room, dead, murdered, and the safe, with all that was in it, gone! But come, we must go out to Baldoon. Poor creatures! They must be all broken to pieces!"

I had never seen Dan so completely thrown off his balance. Neither had I ever been so stricken by anything, myself. And to make matters worse I began to see something in the possible outcome of the case that threatened to be even more horrible than the tragedy itself. So I called a halt.

"Dan, Dan, we must pull ourselves together, and do some quick thinking! We can't go to Baldoon until we have looked a little further than the murder and robbery of last night!"

"Why? What do you mean?"

"I mean that unless the real murderers can be at least indicated, and that at once, the disappearance of Tom Brimmicom and Prof. Grisdale, on the night of the crime, will fix suspicion upon them. And if the real murderers cannot be found at all it may

become a question how to save Tom and the Professor from the gallows, should they get into the hands of the authorities. God help us all!"

"My soul and body!" cried Dan in deeper distress than ever. "I hadn't thought of that! But say, I can clear the Professor by the Potawatomies that have had him in their keeping since a little after ten last night!"

It was then that Dan told me where he had disposed of Grisdale.

"Yes, Dan," I answered, "you might do that; but the Professor would then be able to prosecute you for having him kidnaped. He is in no danger of being arrested for the murder while the Indians have him in custody. Better leave him where he is.

"But what of poor Tom, Dan? I fear there is no one in all the world who could prove an alibi in his case. The M'Garrigers will know of his retiring at the usual hour, long enough before the murder was done, and from that time no one will be able to give an account of his movements. If he

were to return to-day he could only assert his innocence. His inability to prove where he was and what he did during last night would hang him, unless we find the real criminals!"

Verily, we were in deep trouble. We sat and looked in each other's eyes as would men mired in quicksand and for whom there seemed to be no help.

Dan, being desperate, was for making a clean breast of the whole affair at once; and would have done so but for me.

As I saw the matter, and impressed it upon Dan, that course would help no one but Grisdale, who was safe enough for the time. It could not benefit Tom in the least; for there would be no one who could testify to his movements during the night. The first evidence possible to be procured would show him many miles from The Forks, headed eastward, and, to the minds of a jury, presumably fleeing from the scene of his crime.

While we were yet groping in thick dark-

ness which grew more dense every moment, I looked out of the window and saw Debby Cramer passing on the sidewalk. Pointing toward her I said to Dan, "We must see her before we go to Baldoon. Please ask her to come in."

She entered at Dan's request; and when I had seated her I said, with intentional circumlocution:

"Miss Cramer, I hope you can brace yourself up . . . and do it all in a moment . . . for even a little time is precious just now . . . so that you can bear to hear some very startling news."

"What? Have you heard bad news? Has anything happened to Tom?"

"No; we have had no news of Tom; but something very terrible was done last night, out at Baldoon—something that may bring him into trouble. It is necessary that you shall hear it; and that, for Tom's sake, you and Dan and I shall agree upon some course of action to be taken instantly by us, and to be followed afterward without faltering."

Debby begged me to keep her no longer in suspense, and promised to be brave. So I told her the shocking news from Baldoon. When the horror caused by the recital had a little abated she turned to me and demanded, sharply, "What has that to do with Tom?"

Then I pointed out, as cautiously and delicately as I could, that his disappearance on the night of the murder, his apparent flight from the scene of it, and, possibly, other circumstantial evidence would tend to draw upon him the suspicion of having committed the revolting crime.

It was good to see the firm set of Debby's features, and the flame of indignation that kindled in her eyes—usually so meek and suggestive of heaven—and to hear the ringing confidence of her protesting voice: "No person who has ever looked into Tom Brimmicom's face will find it possible to believe that he has done, or could do, anything bad; much less that he could murder and rob his poor old uncle!"

But when I went on, as I had to do, and explained all the elements of danger in the case, and that the intentional secrecy in Tom's movements had made it impossible to prove where he was during the night, and what he was doing, Debby's courage quite collapsed. Shall I ever forget the brave effort that only partially subdued the expression of her grief and wild despair; and the self-upbraidings wherein she bitterly accused herself of having destroyed Tom; and her mourning that his going had not been delayed for a single day?

Dan and I tried to comfort the sorrow-stricken girl with such words as our own miserable hopelessness would allow. Nothing that we could say availed, however, until Dan began to point out the necessity for immediate action. "We must go," he said, "to the M'Garrigers' almost at once; but before any of us three who knew the secret of Tom's absence put ourselves in the way of meeting them, or any of the neighbors, we must agree on a policy that we will

hold to through the thick and the thin of anything that may develop in the future."

Then Debby was all attention, in the fond hope that some way of disentangling Tom from the coil into which we had brought him was about to be suggested. She little dreamed how helpless we were.

Should we openly and at once confess to the conspiracy and take the consequences of having kidnaped Grisdale, in the hope of thereby clearing him and Tom of the murder?

Debby agreed with us that that course ought not to be adopted, seeing it promised nothing for Tom, and that the Professor was in no present danger.

Should we keep our secret, then, and write Tom at Kennebunkport, Maine, warning him not to return to The Forks unless he had proof by which he could establish an alibi?

I confess with shame that both Dan and I favored this latter plan—it seemed the only one that promised safety to our friend.

But Debby Cramer instantly objected, and with much scorn.

"You surprise me! You should not have proposed such a thing! Granted that a letter addressed to Tom would not start an officer to Kennebunkport the day of mailing, which I doubt, it would be a cowardly way out of immediate danger; and it would doom Tom to a lifelong suspicion, and to skulking in disguise to avoid arrest. I think I know him well enough to say that he would refuse to take that way.

"No, gentlemen; Tom must come back as he intended when he started, and meet whatever may come of this dreadful affair. If he *must* be arraigned and tried for his life, and must *even die* for the crime he never, never committed that would be less bad than to live under suspicion and in hiding from the eyes of all who have known and honored him."

Dan and I, like the Psalmist, were "dumb with silence" before a merited rebuke. For a space Debby, also, was silent, struggling

with the emotion under which her last awful sentence had been uttered. Then she continued:

"How is it that you have so soon consented that only the worst for Tom is likely to come of this matter? May not the coroner's inquest discover the real criminal, or, at least, some clew that will lead to him?

"I am only a woman, and have little knowledge of such things. But I will venture to tell you the way that seems best to me.

"Let us keep the secrets of our conspiracy against Grisdale to ourselves; let the authorities take any course that may be suggested by such facts of the case as may be brought out at the inquest; let us three who have had to do with getting Tom into this danger form ourselves into a private detective agency to run down the real perpetrator of this crime in our own way; and let us pray God that we be in time to prevent the innocent from suffering for the guilty."

Behold, herein, a fresh instance of the way in which the feminine mind, when roused to intensest activity by the peril of one greatly beloved, will go by a kind of inspiration, straight and swift as the flight of an arrow, to the solution of the problem of deliverance which had altogether puzzled the slower-minded sex.

Not that we saw at the first all that was involved in Debby's solution; but it clearly indicated the only way of salvation with honor, and, later, served to get us upon a trail that led to more brilliant results than we dared to hope for.

Having completed, in its every part, our compact on the basis of Debby's suggestion, we separated. Dan and I hastened to the house of death and mourning. Debby sought the privacy of her own room in order to prepare herself to meet her mother and her friends with a countenance that would not betray the fact that a great and ghastly secret was hidden in her bosom.

On the way to Baldoon I pressed a way-

side boy into service, and sent him up the East Branch with a note to Andy Harris, informing him of the tragic death of his father-in-law, and suggesting that he come prepared to stay with the family during the terrible days that were before them.

My heart sank lower and lower as we drew near the house. This trouble could not vanish away as did the cloud that lowered upon them when Janie's good name was assailed by the woman who had the "muckle Deil" in her tongue. Now, there were finished and irreversible evils upon them. The eccentric but kind-hearted old George, husband, father, and only man of the household was lying in the home dead, murdered! And their entire fortune, save the trifling value of Baldoon House, had been taken by the midnight robber and assassin! Alas for Mary M'Garriger and her daughters!

We were received at the door by honest John Rogers, the village constable, who had already taken charge in the name of the law. He informed us that the coroner,

Doctor Martin, had been notified, and would hold an inquest in a few hours. The body, Rogers said, had been locked in the strong room, and was lying on the floor just as it was found at seven o'clock that morning.

In the dining room we found the five sorrowful women, sitting in silent grief; for the effect of the first violent shock had passed away. They seemed now to be numb and speechless, like people transfixed by the sense of a yet unmeasured horror which threatened to be too great to bear and live.

Their condition infected us who had come to console them with like feelings. Dan made his way to Bell's side and took her hand, but for once had nothing to say; perhaps silence was the best interpreter of a sympathy that overreached all forms of expression.

Taking the hand of the newly widowed Mary M'Garriger, I managed to say:

"I am always slow of speech in the pres-

ence of death and sorrow. I am doubly so in this house to-day. But we want you to know that to the core of our hearts we feel the blow that has fallen so cruelly upon you. We have come to be with you and to do all that friendship can to help you through the dark days that have come."

After a moment of convulsive weeping Mrs. M'Garriger, by a wonderful effort of will, subdued the violence of her emotions and answered—a little at a time—between sobs that would not be restrained:

"Yir aye the friend that sticketh closer than a brither, an' we're no unthankfu'. But wha *can* help us, the noo? Div ye thenk the A'michty wull pit forth hes han' an' raise up ma' dear man that's lyin' in bye there, deid by the han' o' a murderer? An' ye that are sic a scholar, tell ma, gin ye ken, whaur wes the A'michty last nicht . . . when that innocent auld man . . . that never did hairm tae ony wes bein' murdered in the dairk?"

I would have been even more appalled than I was at the frightful proportions of Mary M'Garriger's distress, and at the awful questions it raised, had I not remembered how David, in a like experience, cried out, "Hath God forgotten?" And how a stronger than David, in the moment of his greatest extremity, pressed his question to the ear of God himself: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

After replying with such wisdom as was mine to the cry of her heart's distress and doubt, I tried to turn her thoughts to some things requiring immediate practical attention. I told her that I had already sent word to Andy Harris, and promised, at her request, to notify William M'Garriger's people.

Then I pointed out the course that would have to be taken in the legal inquiry into the cause of her husband's death.

"The coroner, with his jury, will be here a little after noon. You and the girls will be required to give what evidence you can

concerning the finding of the body, and any circumstances known to you that may throw light upon the crime committed last night. Now, you have taken no food, I judge, since yesterday. Unless you have some refreshment first, you will not be able to go through the ordeal before you this afternoon. Let Dan and me boil the kettle and make you a cup of tea—and we'll find something more solid in the cupboard. You must take food or you'll break down altogether."

But Dan and I were reprieved from the kitchen by the entrance of Debby Cramer, who cheerfully undertook to prepare a suitable luncheon.

While this was being done Mrs. M'Garriger gave a new proof of the native strength and sagacity of her mind. Calling me aside, and speaking in an undertone, she said:

"A' dinna ken what ye wull thenk o' it, for A'm a' through other wi' it masel', but A'm feart ther's mair tribble on oor han's

than puir Geordie's deith. Tom Brimmicom's no tae the fore! He wesna here airly thes mornin' when we cam' upon that that's lyin' in the strong room! He didna sleep in hes beid last nicht!

"What A'm sair feart o' es that Tam, sittin' late, maybe sleepin' in hes chair, wes wakit by some soond that wes made, an' gaed oot aefter the robbers an' wes murdered like hes uncle, an' that they hae mad' way wi' hes body.

"Ye tell't ma that we wad be tae testifee thes aefternoon. *Noo tell ma hoo tae speak sae that they wullna suspicion that puir Tam's the guilty man, himsel'!* For we canna gie ony account o' him, whether he's leevin' or deid, or what he wes daein', or where he's been since ten o' the clock, last nicht!"

I dared not give the poor soul the relief that a sure knowledge of what had become of Tom would have ministered. I consoled her, however, by affirming my strong conviction that when the truth came to be known it would be found that he was neither

dead nor guilty of any crime. Concerning the approaching inquest I counseled that she should make no unnecessary reference to Tom, and answer every question referring to him as briefly as possible, but with perfect truth.

The inquest began at one o'clock. After viewing the body as it lay on the floor of the strong room, and examining the room itself very carefully, the jury assembled in the large sitting room; the corpse being placed before them on a bench.

There was no need of a post-mortem examination to determine the cause of death. Evidently but one blow had been struck. The weapon must have been heavy, and the blow of terrible force; for the top of the head was literally crushed in.

It is not necessary to relate the harrowing particulars of the finding of the body of the deceased at a little before seven o'clock that morning. The murder must have been committed, the coroner said, between eleven o'clock and midnight.

But when inquisition was made for the motive of the dark deed, and for the doer of it, things were brought out that made every heart stand still with mingled fear and horror —some because they did not know the whole truth, and others because they did know it.

The coroner's questions elicited that George M'Garriger, so far as was known, had not an enemy who could be suspected of slaying him through malice; that the motive which actuated his slayer, or slayers, must have been robbery, since the safe with all its contents had been taken; that a large sum of money, over $50,000, was in the safe; that whoever committed the crime must have known that the money was in the safe; that the deceased was in the habit of rising from his bed at different times of the night, when he thought others were sleeping, and going to his strong room; and that, in all probability, he had, last night, surprised the robbers in their attempt to open the safe, and had been murdered by them in order to carry out the robbery.

Then the coroner began to search for clews to the perpetrators.

"Mrs. M'Garriger, how many people knew that your husband kept his money in the house?"

"A'm no sure, Doctor Martin. We thocht it wes kent tae naebody forbye oor ain family."

"When you say your own family, whom do you mean?"

"A' mean George an' masel', an' the five lassies, an' Andy Harris that's married, es ye ken, upon Janie, an' Tom Brimmicom, oor nephew, that's leeved wi' us since he cam' frae Ireland."

"Have you reason to suspect any one in particular of having done these crimes?"

"No, Doctor, A' hevna. A' ken weel that ma guid man hes ben murdered, an' that A've ben weedowed an' robbed in ae nicht; but the Lord haud ma frae pitten suspeecion upon ony that A' dinna ken tae be guilty!"

"Mrs. M'Garriger, I observe that all the

persons you have named as belonging to your family are present but one. It has been suggested by one of the jurors that his absence, at a time like this, is remarkable. Where is Mr. Brimmicom?"

"A' canna tell ye that, Doctor. Last night Tom complained o' a sair heed, an' went till hes room at ten o' the clock. We cried upon him when we found puir George lyin' deid; an' when he didna come, ane o' the lassies gaed till hes room, but he 'wesna there. Hes beid hedna ben sleepit in. A'm sair feart that the same han's that murdered George hae mad' wey wi' Tom."

Here the coroner ordered an immediate examination of Tom's room, in the hope that some explanation of his mysterious absence might be found. The only result was the discovery that he had left the house voluntarily; for he had taken his portmanteau, and certain changes of linen which were missing from the drawer where Mrs. M'Garriger had put them the day before.

When about to resume work on the main

inquest a new sensation added to the coroner's perplexity. A messenger had come from the village bringing word of the unaccountable disappearance of Prof. Grisdale. At the breakfast hour that morning his landlady had called him repeatedly; and, when he did not appear, had gone into his room to find it empty of the Professor, and that his bed had not been occupied during the night!

All this was too much for worthy Doctor Martin. Turning to the jury, he said:

"Gentlemen, the situation I called you to investigate was serious enough at the first. It has developed circumstances so grave that I ought to pause and call in the help of persons known to be expert in such matters. A foul murder and a heavy robbery have been committed. On the night of these crimes two of our citizens disappeared unaccountably, not to say suspiciously. One of them was of the very limited number who knew that the man who has been murdered and robbed kept a very large sum of money

in his safe. The inquest is adjourned to one o'clock to-morrow. In the meantime constable Rogers will be able to bring in a detective and a Queen's counsel from Sarnia."

The tale of the tragedy at Baldoon is nearly told.

Mr. Donald Cameron, Q. C., came down from Sarnia to watch the case in the interest of public justice; and with him a detective of some repute.

Every circumstance in the situation was closely investigated. Careful search was made in every direction that promised a clew. But nothing beyond what was brought into full view at the first session of the inquest was discovered. The coroner and his jury were convinced that there was a guilty connection between the murder of George M'Garriger and the supposed flight of Tom Brimmicom and Prof. Grisdale. They had fled the country; therefore they had committed crime; the only crime known to have been committed in the place

was that at Baldoon, on the very night of their disappearance; therefore they had fled because they had murdered and robbed George M'Garriger.

Very naturally the jury rendered a verdict which read, in part, as follows:

"The said George M'Garriger came to his death by a wound found on the top of his head, inflicted by means of a weapon in the hands of some person unknown. The jury find, further, that the said person unknown, by and with the aid of another person, or other persons unknown, did feloniously rob the estate of the said George M'Garriger of a large sum of money by carrying away an iron safe wherein was deposited for safe keeping the said large sum of money.

"And the jury find, further, that in view of the disappearance from the vicinity where, and on the same night when the said crimes of murder and robbery were committed, of one Thomas Brimmicom and one Joseph Grisdale, they, the said Thomas Brimmicom and Joseph Grisdale, ought to

be arrested and brought to trial on the reasonable suspicion that they committed the said crimes of murder and robbery."

Pursuant to the findings of the coroner's jury warrants were issued for the arrest of Tom and Prof. Grisdale, but it was some time before any arrest was made.

The episode of the Baldoon tragedy extended itself into another, of at least equal interest, in such manner that the story of it cannot be finished separately. It is only necessary, in taking a temporary leave of it, to record two or three events that belong properly to its first stages.

George M'Garriger's funeral, held four days after his death, has never been equaled in our community as an expression of universal sympathy for the living and respect for the dead.

Poor old George! He had his oddities, and positive defects of character, for he was human. But on that day every such thing was obscured and forgotten. Our thoughts dwelt on his prevailing virtues, his hearty

good will toward all that made him call every man "neighbor," his quaint humor, and his genuine though sometimes eccentric affection for his family.

The Reverend Solomon Weldon was sent for to conduct the service. If the discourse could not be called a specimen of polished eloquence it was something immeasurably better for the occasion. It made every one feel—the stricken family most of all—the near beating of a great, tender, pitiful, human heart, best interpreter of the heart of God! In the closing sentences of his prayer the minister seemed to be transfigured. Reverently I opened my eyes that I might look upon the face of the man who could speak such words to God, and, behold, it was the face of an angel! And he went on to say, in his prayer:

"When human friends with their helpful love shall have gone, as go they must, and these bereaved women sit down alone with their sorrow in the desolated home, and listen in vain for the voice that has been

stilled, and long for one touch of the hand that has vanished, then, O Lord, let them not be alone; but pity them, and take them into thine own arms and comfort them as a mother doth her child."

Although they were left absolutely penniless, Mary M'Garriger and her daughters were not allowed to feel the pinch of want. Big-hearted Andy Harris provided everything necessary for the funeral, and for their change into mourning, utterly refusing the generous assistance proffered by many friends of the family.

"Thet's all right, neighbors," said Andy. "Glad ye made the offer; but there's no 'casion. What's mine is Janie's, an' what's Janie's is her mother's, an' what's her mother's, es ye all know, is fer any child o' hers, world without end, es the preacher says.

"I done better than most folks know when I went out West, that time. There's plenty fer us all. An' there's a thousand dollars, in gold, fer the man thet trails an' brings to jestice the murderers o' George

M'Garriger, or any one of 'em,—onless I git 'em first!

"An' I want to say, right now, thet the man thet goes after Tom Brimmicom will fool his time! We don't know where he is, nor why he went away. But Janie an' Mother M'Garriger says that Tom never done it. An' I say he never done it; an' I shan't want to jine up with any numskull thet takes notice o' them fool warrants thet's out. It's *jest* possible thet the 'said Joseph Grisdale,' es the vardict reads, wus in it—I wouldn't put it past him. Ef he wus, by the Lord thet made me, he shill pull hemp!"

This to me, with my almost guilty secret of the innocence of both Tom and Grisdale, and my knowledge of what had become of them!

The day after the funeral Baldoon House was closed; for Andy insisted that Mrs. M'Garriger and the girls should return to him and Janie, in the old home up the East Branch.

Debby Cramer thought it would not be well for Tom to come back to that which was awaiting him at The Forks without preparation. Therefore she wrote him, under cover to Horace Bristol—trusting, despite many chances against her, that it would reach him in time.

I will not transcribe the whole of that letter. After recounting everything connected with the tragedy up to the issuing of a warrant for the arrest of "one Thomas Brimmicom," she continued:

"I know you will insist on returning just as you had planned, and I want you to; but I could not bear to have you meet these things as a surprise. We would have confessed the conspiracy and produced Grisdale if we could have seen any way of proving an alibi for you. But we judged that you had taken good care that your movements, for the first few hours at least, were unknown to anybody.

"Dear Tom, you must be prepared for arrest and imprisonment and trial; but I

trust in God there will be nothing worse; and that we shall be able to produce the slayers of George M'Garriger in time.

"Andy Harris is offering a reward of a thousand dollars in gold for the conviction of the murderers, or any one of them. Dan Littleton is determined to move earth and heaven to bring the guilt home to the right parties. And don't be surprised, Tom, if you find that I, too, have had some hand in it. For I am tortured with the feeling that I was the means of leading you into this peril, and pray God, day and night, to let me be the means of your deliverance."

Debby's letter concluded with some things sacred to the eyes of Tom Brimmicom; therefore I refrain from transcribing them, and let fall the curtain, temporarily, on the Tragedy of Baldoon.

CHAPTER IX.

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY?

Four persons, viz., Debby Cramer, Dan Littleton, Andy Harris, and I who write these chronicles, entered into a solemn league and covenant to hunt down and bring to justice the murderers of George M'Garriger.

Our motive was complex, being made up in part of zeal for the interests of justice and regard for the M'Garriger family, but, in the main, of a keen sense of duty toward young Tom Brimmicom. In carrying out our well meant conspiracy against Grisdale Tom had disappeared in a time and manner which reasonably suggested the suspicion that he was the murderer and robber of his uncle. We had led him into peril of his life. Nothing but the discovery of the real criminals could save him. Tom's life and honor ought to be saved!

As we staggered and groaned in spirit under the burden that was upon us there came to mind, with all the force of inspiration, a late emphatic saying of Tom's: "It is little less than blasphemy to say that a thing that ought to be done can't be done!" That gave us our watchword—"Tom ought to be, could be, must be saved!"

What was done by three of the syndicate would make very amusing reading, and a lot of it; but I prefer to leave it unwritten. Why should I fill all the space that would be required simply to amuse you at the expense of three gentlemen, respectable enough in most things, but who were left out of sight and put to shame, as amateur detectives, by a young and delicate woman? We had enough of blushing before the limited community at The Forks, and feel no desire to have our blunders exploited before a larger public.

Of course we men expected little help from Debby Cramer. In a patronizing way we took her into our most secret counsels,

because of her consuming anxiety to be doing something toward saving Tom from the peril into which she had led him. It would be no disadvantage to our work, we thought; and it would satisfy her.

Meantime, Debby struck out on an independent course. Perhaps she felt that we did not appreciate, duly, her abilities as a detective;—or was it that she did not highly esteem our abilities and methods? Whatever the reason, she resolved to act alone.

Three days in succession Debby visited the vicinity of Baldoon House, taking observations.

Then she called us together and submitted a partial theory, and a clew that we thought worthy of consideration.

"I started out," said she, "with the idea that any clew that did not start from Baldoon would be baffling, and difficult to follow.

"The first two days I found nothing encouraging. On the third, I made a discovery that suggests a solution sufficiently

promising to begin work on. As far as my fractional theory goes it requires that which is almost impossible of belief,—that the double crime at Baldoon was committed by one man! Of course one man struck the murderous blow; but it is next to incredible that any ordinary man could carry away the safe with all that gold in it.

"Mrs. M'Garriger said, you will remember, that the safe itself weighed 200 pounds. The gold that was in it, counting $18 to the ounce, must have weighed 180 pounds more, making, with the safe, a weight of 380 pounds. And yet, impossible as it seems, I am beginning to believe that one man carried it away.

"I think the robber went there intending to burglarize the safe, not knowing how large a sum it contained. I think poor old George came upon him unawares, and was stricken down. And I think the robber, fearing that some sound made in the encounter might bring others upon him, shouldered the safe and walked away."

At that point in Debby's report Dan Littleton recovered breath enough to ask:

"But, Miss Cramer, will you please tell us what it was you discovered that led you to such amazing conclusions?"

"Certainly; that is what I most wanted to tell. I suppose it should have come first. Well, when I found no marks on the windows and doors I commenced to walk round and round the house, widening the circle at each round, and looking carefully for any tracks that might have been made, and any small object that might have been dropped.

"At last my circle was wide enough to touch the bank of the little lagoon that is to the north of the house. There I made my discovery.

"In the dark loamy margin of the lagoon I found a place that had been pressed down smooth by the bottom of a canoe that had landed there, and had been drawn well up on the bank to prevent it from floating away.

"And I found tracks of a man—a little

effaced by the weather, but still quite discernible—going toward the house, and returning from it. They were the tracks of a very large man—at least his feet were large. I could trace them only forty or fifty feet from the lagoon toward the house, and the same distance returning, for the surface, beyond that point, is hard.

"And I noted that the returning tracks, though made by the same feet that went toward the house, are irregular, closer together, and deeper than those leading the other way. *They show that the man went to the house light and returned weighed down and staggering under a heavy burden!*"

Now, this was altogether new, and very marvelous to us men; and it moved us to unbounded admiration. Not that we adopted Debby's beginning of a theory all at once; but what energy, what originality, what acumen she was displaying!

We visited the lagoon the next morning, going out separately; for we desired to preserve the utmost secrecy about the matter

until we had determined how much was in it, and what steps, if any, should be taken. We found everything as Debby had described it. The marks of the canoe and the tracks of the man were unmistakable. But who could affirm that these traces were left by the man who killed George M'Garriger? Might not some one wholly innocent of the crime have made a landing there for an honest purpose? And, granting that they were made by the murderer, who could follow up a trail which was broken by a water reach of unknown length?

When we raised these questions, as we stood together on the bank of the lagoon, we found to our increased astonishment that Debby was ready to answer.

"I do not affirm that these are the tracks of the murderer; I only believe it. And since this is the first and only trail that has been found it seems to me that it should be investigated.

"I have no thought of following it up by the sight of the eyes, as an Indian would

have to do. There are better methods at the command of a trained intellect. We will catch this criminal, not by trailing him, but by logic.

"Let it be granted that the murderer landed here, that he went to the house, committed the crime, and came back to this point carrying a burden of 380 pounds: What follows?

"It follows that the man we are so anxious to find is probably the strongest man in all this region. Find me the man within a radius of twenty miles from this point who is able to walk away with such a burden and I will take the responsibility of having him shadowed! It is borne in upon me that there cannot be two such Samsons in this part of the country!"

To say that we were conquered, and caught up as on the wings of a tornado, and carried on resistlessly to Debby's conclusions, is to state the simple truth, in sufficiently moderate terms. In our eyes she seemed another Nemesis sighting from

afar the skulking doer of wrong and, with divine accuracy, pointing out to the powers of justice the way to his lair.

Very cheerfully we undertook to search for the man—for there must be one such—who could do the herculean feat required by Debby's theory, and to shadow him when found. Then we begged her to throw off, as much as possible, the nervous strain which was evidently telling upon her health. We also cautioned her against being too sanguine, and too impatient for results. The search for the strong man might be long. The process of finding proof that would convict might be longer still. Possibly, even probably, she would have to see Tom under arrest and brought to trial for the hideous crime. She must brace herself to bear everything with fortitude, trusting in God, and also in us, that the truth would be brought to light in good time to save both his life and his honor. All which, Debby promised to do.

The following day, and with all possible

secrecy, the hunt for the unknown Hercules was begun; and it was carried on thereafter with all the energy and thoroughness that the zeal of love and the power of money could supply.

Meanwhile, a young man was coming up from the East; and his heart was exceeding heavy. In all the days of his life Tom Brimmicom has had no other trouble great enough to be compared to that which came of his secret quest for Horace Bristol.

The tragic death of his uncle; the bereaved and impoverished condition of his aunt and cousins; the foul imputations that had been fixed upon himself; the warrant of arrest that awaited his arrival at The Forks; the certain going of the hateful news across the sea to break every heart in his beloved home circle;—was it any wonder that Tom was depressed, and that he mourned of these things to Horace Bristol as they journeyed westward together?

True, he was not without the support of the two best friends a man in trouble can

have—conscience and hope. He knew he was innocent. He had undertaken his secret mission at the bidding of love and chivalry. And he had good friends on the scene of action, who would undertake even the impossible to vindicate him. His late strong utterance revived and iterated itself in his mind again and again—"It is little less than blasphemy to say that the thing that ought to be done can't be done!"

Moreover, he had found in Horace Bristol a good friend to have in a time of need. Bristol's experience of life had been large and varied; and he had that sturdy poise which comes of a keen intellect, a brave heart, and the command of great wealth. And he was much drawn toward the high-souled young man who, at so great cost to himself, had brought the hope that his loyal and patient love for Deborah Dean might yet find its fruition. For, until Tom came, he had thought of her as another man's wife.

As they traveled toward The Forks Tom and Horace Bristol discussed the best plan of

movements to be followed upon reaching their destination. Of necessity it was largely shaped by Bristol; for Tom was so unsettled as to be incapable of thinking it out to good advantage.

"You're in more than a peck of trouble, young man," said Bristol, "but keep your upper lip stiff. I shan't forget that you got into it by trying to do a good turn to me, and to her that used to be Deborah Dean and is going to be Mrs. Horace Bristol. I'll stand by you, Tom Brimmicom, to my last dollar, and my last pulse! And I guess you've got some more good friends up there at The Forks.

"Now, it's high time we were calculating ahead. If nothing happens we'll be at The Forks in two days more. How had we best manage when we get there?"

"I suppose," said Tom, very despondingly, "there'll be nothing for me to do but find the constable and surrender myself, —I don't mean to let him hunt me. Then you'll have to part company with me, and

can renew your acquaintance with Mrs. Cramer."

There was a flush of anger on Bristol's face, and something of sharpness in his tone, as he rejoined:

"See here, young man, if you speak that way again, blamed if I don't kidnap you and carry you off to the Sandwich Islands and keep you there until you learn how to understand friendship! If you happen to have a New Testament about your clothes, I'll just lay my hand on it and swear to what I'm going to say, so I won't have to say it again;—which is, that I won't speak to Mrs. Cramer, nor set eyes on her, if I can help it, until your tangle with the law is ended, and you are a free man, for that's the way it's going to come out!"

After ample and pathetic apology from Tom, Horace Bristol continued:

"Let me block out a plan; you can approve, or amend, after you've considered it.

"We'll contrive to get into The Forks a

little after dark, to-morrow night. I mean to put up at the tavern as a stranger wishing to look about in that region for a while. But before I do that you must show me the office where you all met when you hatched that conspiracy against Grisdale; then you can go to one of your friends for supper. There's going to be another meeting at that office, to-morrow night, at nine o'clock, and you, and Debby Cramer, and I, and the two gentlemen you've told me about—Dan Littleton and the other—are going to be at it. You will know where to send to notify them.

"When we are all together in council we'll hear what they have done in your absence up to date, and decide what's to be done next."

Tom saw nothing to amend in Bristol's plan; so it was adopted and carried into effect.

When I opened my door to Tom's timid rap I was not so much surprised as shocked; for he had not been out of my thoughts for many hours at a time since he went East.

But the face that had gone forth full and ruddy, buoyant and hopeful, had come back blanched, thin, careworn, desperate. I knew it was not the fear of death that had wrecked him so. As in written words his face signified horror at being held guilty by his fellow men; and the unspeakable agony of his soul for father and mother, brother and sister, who must soon receive the awful news that their Tom had been accused, perhaps executed, as a murderer.

I greeted him in tears, and bade him welcome with such broken words as my emotions would allow me to utter.

"You are kind," said he, in a tone that betokened a sense of calamity that could not be remedied. "You are kind, and true; and I thank you. I want to ask you at once to draw the blinds and in every way possible conceal the fact of my presence at The Forks, for to-night. I will proclaim it myself in the morning by surrendering to the constable; but I will not be hunted down and captured."

Then, as though details of the tragedy and the inquest were hateful and unnecessary, he began abruptly to tell me of Horace Bristol, and the meeting planned for that night. I found no difficulty in notifying Dan Littleton to attend at nine o'clock. As for Debby, I took care that she and Tom should meet in private, and have half an hour together before facing the rest of us. These things being duly arranged and provided for, Tom and I sat down to a substantial supper, during which I led the conversation to the events of his journey rather than to local affairs; for I perceived that his preference was decidedly in that direction.

Just what passed between Debby and Tom during their private interview of thirty minutes is not known, and ought not to be told if it were known. But when they came to us in the office at nine o'clock there was something new, and good to see, in the expression of Tom's face—something suggestive of the fact that, notwithstanding all

the trouble hanging over his head, it was well to be Tom Brimmicom, and that he thought so himself.

Horace Bristol had introduced himself to Dan and me. When Debby entered, with Tom, and Bristol was presented to her, there was a moment of profound silence. They looked into each other's eyes mutely, being agitated by thoughts and questions that could not be voiced then and there.

At last the silence was broken by Debby, who said, as she took his proffered hand:

"Mr. Bristol, I am glad, for many reasons, that you have come. I hope we shall be good friends. You find us at this moment in great need of help."

"Miss Cramer," he replied, "I have never in my life done anything with as much good will as I have felt in coming here with Mr. Brimmicom. Of course we shall be good friends; but we can't wait for friendship to grow according to rule. I guess every one here has a good deal at stake in this young man. We must take one another at par in

the start, and get to work in his behalf; for he's in a tight place. After he's free well, I hope there'll be something more than friendship."

"And now," he continued, leading Debby to a seat, "let's get to business right away. Mr. Brimmicom and I would like to know how matters stand here. Have you got on the track of the villains that did the killing and the robbing?"

At my request Dan Littleton took up the story, and told it well, of how we, in our masculine pride, had searched for clews, and offered rewards, without success. Then he told of Debby's independent effort, and what she had discovered on the bank of the lagoon; and how she had reasoned from the tracks to two helpful conclusions—that one man had done the murder and carried away the safe; and that, therefore, he must be the strongest man in the country.

"Since then," said Dan, "we have been circling out from The Forks in search of a man strong enough to carry away that safe.

We have four trusty men traveling the country in as many different directions, looking, professedly, for able-bodied men to work in the lumber woods next winter, but, really, for the Samson we are after. When the man is found we will look up his record, and shadow his movements, and, if he is guilty, find sufficient evidence to justify us in having him arrested and brought to trial. We have not heard from any of our men yet. Their instructions are to keepaway from The Forks until they have either found the man or proved by search that there is no such man within a radius of twenty miles from this center."

Doubtless Tom had heard much of this from Debby; but it was all new to Horace Bristol, and evidently not quite satisfactory. He had pondered every word as it was uttered, and when Dan finished his statement, he sat rubbing his forehead as if perplexed and doubtful. At last he said:

"It's a mighty slender chance, gentlemen; but I guess it's all there is to go by. If it

turns out all right it'll be the smartest bit of detective work that ever was done! Just think! To get onto the fellow, from his tracks that ended in the water, by a single jump of the intellect to his uncommon strength that would sort him out of ten thousand as the one among them all who could carry that burden! By George, it don't seem so slender a chance after all, Miss Cramer! We'll hope for the best, and work for it, too.

"Now, while we're waiting to hear from your men, what can be done to help along? And what shall we do with Mr. Brimmicom?"

Tom took it upon himself to answer both questions.

"There is nothing further to be done until the strong man is found.

"As for what to do with me, that is already decided. I shall consent to remain in hiding this one night and no longer. It's a new thing under heaven for a Brimmicom to be afraid to show his face among men.

At daylight to-morrow morning I shall find John Rogers and give myself up. Miss Cramer and I are agreed in this.

"But I want you all to know that I do not despair, now, of an honorable acquittal. While I could see before me nothing but conviction, or, worse still, the Scotch verdict of not proven, I was ready to curse the day I was born. But all that has been changed. I believe in Miss Cramer's intuition—if it were not an inspiration—and confidently expect that you will produce the guilty man in time to clear me in open court."

Horace Bristol protested, stoutly, as did we all, except Debby, against Tom's proposal to surrender.

"Why on earth," said Bristol, "can't you wait, at least a few days, and give us a chance to get our hands on the right man? That would save you from arrest, and jail, and a lot of things that are no fun, I assure you."

But Tom was immovable. "It hurts me cruelly," he said, "to go against you; but I

think it would kill me, and some others, to have the news go over to Ireland that I was caught hiding from arrest. I tell you, friends, they won't believe me guilty—over there where I am known—unless I do something that amounts to an admission of guilt. There are people who will take my word against all the world, though it be spoken with the rope around my neck, and, so help me God, they shall have no cause to doubt me, even for a moment!"

We were not convinced; but what could be done with a young man so headstrong and heartstrong, aided and abetted by such a young woman as Debby Cramer? There was nothing for it but to yield under protest, and adapt our plans to the course Tom had determined to take, as best we could.

Bristol had already announced himself at the village tavern as Timothy Brown, and desired us to call him by that name until after Tom's acquittal. Then he would resume his own name, and attend to . . . some other business.

There was no lack of zeal, nor of money, and both were to be drawn upon to any extent necessary to expedite the finding of the criminal; for the Court of Queen's Bench, before which Tom would be tried, would sit in three weeks from that day. We arranged, also, to secure for his defense the best counsel to be had in the province.

There was a strange mingling of anxiety and hopefulness, fear and courage, sympathy and admiration, in our parting that night. For, notwithstanding our belief that we could save him, we let Tom go into the grip of the law with much fear and trembling,—it seemed a dreadful thing to be put on trial for his life. Our sympathy was inspired and measured by the darkness of the shadows into which he was passing; our admiration, by the stubborn heroism which would not let him hide for one moment from the ordeal which had been created for him by the crimes of another man.

Many interesting things came to pass in the next twenty-one days, but to tell them

in detail would require a separate volume.

Tom surrendered himself, was examined and committed to the county jail in Sarnia; and, later, was formally indicted by the grand jury. It was held at each step that the circumstantial evidence against him, and the impossibility of proving an alibi, were sufficient reasons for sending him to trial.

The next week after Tom's commitment Dan Littleton made one of his master strokes of generalship. The Weekly Observer, printed in Sarnia, contained a résumé of the history of the crimes at Baldoon; and announced that one of the murderers, young Brimmicom, had surrendered himself, and had been committed for trial. The article went on to say that it only remained for the officers of justice to lay their hands upon Joseph Grisdale, the other thug, and get him behind the bars. And the ferocious editorial closed with the averment that "the day these abandoned wretches dangle from the gallows will be a

day of good riddance to the county of Lambton."

The astute Dan put a copy of that issue of the Observer into the hands of Sogosca, the Potawatomie, who had Grisdale in custody on Walpole Island.

"I want you," said Dan, "to give this paper to the bad white man. When he has read it tell him that you can get a thousand dollars for finding the men who killed and robbed old George M'Garriger; and that you mean to bring him over to The Forks and give him up to the constables, for the paper says that he is one of them.

"He will be scared; and will beg you to paddle him across to the Michigan side and let him go. And, when you have scared him well, take him over, and let him go where he pleases. He didn't kill any one. We don't want to hang him; but he must never come back to The Forks!"

The result was entirely satisfactory. From that midnight on which Sogosca landed him in Michigan Prof. Grisdale was

heard of, in our part of the world, no more. We who were in the secret judged that he traveled far toward the setting sun, and changed his name, before he resumed lecturing and taking silver collections at the door.

The days fled past with fearful rapidity, each leaving us so much nearer the time when Tom must plead to the charges of robbery and murder. The fact that the spies had made no report signified that they had not found their man. Ten, fifteen, seventeen of the twenty-one precious days between Tom's return and his trial went by, and not one ray of light! We began to look a question into each other's eyes that we dared not put into words.

But on the eighteenth day, when the agony had become almost intolerable, I received a note from Debby Cramer begging me to summon Dan and Andy and Horace Bristol to meet her in my office at five that afternoon, for she had something of importance to communicate.

"Gentlemen," said Debby, when we met, "I think I have seen the murderer, and can tell you where to find him. When I was at Carolin's this morning there came in the largest man I ever saw. I watched him with a kind of fascination as he stood at the opposite counter buying gunpowder and lead. If I'm wrong, God forgive me; but he looks evil enough, and strong enough, to have done the crimes for which poor Tom is languishing in jail.

"After he had gone out of hearing I asked the salesman who was serving me, 'Who is that large man, and where does he come from?' 'Oh,' said he, 'that's Wilse Holton —Big Wilse, everybody calls him. He don't come to town very often. He's a lone bachelor and lives in a hovel which, they say, isn't fit for a beast. He hunts and fishes, and, it's said, has had to do with smuggling, and running other people's horses over the line. But he's slyer than any fox, and has kept clear of the law, so far. He lives up at Haley's Bend, on

the North Branch, about ten miles from here.' "

At this point Andy Harris, being carried away by growing excitement which began with the mention of Big Wilse's name, broke in on Debby's communication.

"Miss Cramer," he said, "you needn't go any further! I ust to know that man when I lumbered up the North Branch. He's es strong es two yoke of oxen; an' es jest the kind o' wild beast thet would do what wus done thet night at Baldoon. It's uncommon strange thet I didn't think of him afore now —the rest of you didn't know him.

"But now, men, what's to do next? Whatever it is ther's a mighty short time to do it in! Thet's to say, if we're goin' to clear Tom Brimmicom."

I insisted that before turning suspicion on the man we should, in all fairness, get some facts that would justify it; and suggested that since Andy knew him and his place of abode he would be the right one to conduct the investigation.

After much discussion we agreed on a plan. If the arrest could be justified we must be ready to act, at the latest, by daylight on the day of Tom's trial. Haley's Bend being only fifteen miles from Sarnia, and not much out of the way thither, we could make the arrest in the early morning and get to court before the trial would be finished.

In order to have something to build on Andy Harris and Horace Bristol were to visit the place where Big Wilse lived, collect such evidence as could be found, and report results the night before the trial. Dan and I were to prepare all things at The Forks for instant action if the way were clear,—a warrant, ready for execution, two regular constables equipped for the road, and the magistrate waiting in my office to swear in Dan, Bristol and Andy Harris as special constables. In our later movements it was allotted to me to escort Debby Cramer to Sarnia the afternoon before the trial; for she insisted on going, and her mother had

reluctantly consented on the condition that I would take charge of her. It would have been greatly to the satisfaction of every one concerned if Mrs. Cramer herself had undertaken the duty assigned to me. But for the time being she was convinced that Tom and Grisdale were guilty, and nothing could induce her to lend any countenance to either of them.

Like many another of the best concerted schemes of mice and men, our plans miscarried at some points. In particular: Andy Harris and Bristol did not get back from Haley's Bend until Debby Cramer and I had been two hours on the way to Sarnia. It was a bitter disappointment to have to go to Tom, in the morning, with nothing better than hope. We had made sure of being able to bring him certainty; but now there was nothing to offer but expectation based on a yet unsupported theory.

Tom's faith in Debby's theory, and his courage growing out of it, were a real comfort to us who had come to comfort him. To

Debby's entreaty that he would keep up his heart, and look for deliverance at any moment, he replied:

"Yes, my dear, I will be strong-hearted. Your voice is as the voice of God telling me to trust and not be afraid. Ever since I came back from the East I have not had a moment of doubt as to the issue; for I have my innocence, and my good friends, and you, and God on my side."

The scene that brought Tom Brimmicom's trial to a sudden end will not soon be forgotten by any who witnessed it.

After all was over some people accused us of having purposely planned and timed our movements so as to create the dramatic situation which developed. Nothing could be more baseless and unjust. For myself, and on the part of the friends who were associated with me, I resent the imputation with deep feeling.

Once upon a time a small boy forgot himself and whistled in school. His answer to the teacher's stern rebuke was, "Please,

sir, I didn't go for to do it! It just whistled itself!" So say I of the events of that day; —we didn't plan to have them happen as they did; they just dramatized themselves in spite of us.

The story of a trial is usually a very dry affair for the reader, and even more so for the writer. This one is no exception to the rule—seeing that, in the case for the Crown, little or nothing was brought to view that was not elicited by the coroner's inquest. Suppose we agree to take it in a highly condensed form?

The jury has been impaneled, the prisoner brought in, the indictment read, the perfunctory "Guilty or not guilty?" demanded of the accused; and he has answered in a ringing voice, "Not guilty, my lord!"

The Queen's Counsel has made his blood-thirsty and blood-curdling speech of accusation; and has rehearsed what he is pleased to call the damning evidences of the prisoner's guilt—how he fled under cover of

night from the scene of his crime, taking the booty with him, and cannot give any honest account of the place and manner in which he spent the hours of that fateful night.

In his laudable zeal to safeguard the peace of the commonwealth and of her gracious majesty, Queen Victoria, the Queen's Counsel has added to the evidence that was before the coroner the fact that the prisoner had quarreled with his venerable uncle a few weeks before the murder, thus supplying the motive of revenge in addition to that of covetousness.

Having made the foregoing accusations, and declared that each would be supported by sufficient proof, the Queen's Counsel has drawn from the most unwilling lips of Mary M'Garriger and her daughters indubitable testimony as to the facts of the murder and robbery, the disappearance of the accused on the same night, and the previous disagreement between the prisoner and the murdered man.

On the strength of the evidence submitted the Queen's Counsel has demanded of the jury a verdict of guilty, and of the judge the sentence of death!

Then came the end.

The counsel for the defense was on his feet to begin his opening address when a bailiff came up from the door and put a slip of paper in his hand. Having read the message written on it, he said:

"May it please you, my lord; and you, gentlemen of the jury; I have been informed that certain regular and special officers of the law are in waiting at the door, having in charge the man who, by his own confession, murdered and robbed George M'Garriger. If it please you to hear their communication now I have no doubt the way will be made clear for the immediate acquittal of my client."

The collapse of the Queen's Counsel was like that of a punctured balloon. But Judge Wilson, who was a man of large human sympathies, showed a beaming countenance

as he ordered those in waiting to be brought in.

No one in the court room was prepared for the sensation which followed.

Dan Littleton and Horace Bristol, alias Timothy Brown, led the procession that entered, looking like conquering heroes who were entirely satisfied with their victory.

After them came Andy Harris and the two regular constables supporting a man of gigantic stature who was shackled, and bloody, and tottering on his feet.

Bringing up the rear came two men carrying on poles, which they used as a hand-barrow, an iron safe!

The safe was deposited on a table in front of the judge. The new prisoner was led, staggering, to his place at the bar, and settled into the seat with many a contortion and groan that betrayed mental as well as bodily suffering. In fact he was completely broken down in spirit, and bellowed, at times, like a stricken beast that knows its hurt is unto death.

After the counsel for the defense had had a few minutes of conference with the officers who had effected the capture, proceedings were resumed.

"May it please the Court," said Tom's counsel, "I am now prepared to establish the innocence of my client without making any reference to the strange combination of circumstances which the learned Queen's Counsel has used so ingeniously to convict him of the most atrocious and unnatural crimes.

"We could prove that the safe now produced in court is the identical safe that was taken from the house of the late George M'Garriger on the night he was murdered.

"We could prove that this safe was found by the officers of the law near to the residence of Wilson Holton, who, also, is now in court under arrest, and that it had been sunk in six or seven feet of water in the North Branch of the River Sydenham, just in front of Holton's residence.

"But we prefer, my lord, and gentlemen

of the jury, to submit to the court on the part of this man Holton, who is now under arrest and probably in a dying condition, his confession that he, alone, murdered the late George M'Garriger, and carried the safe from the house to the place where he had left his canoe in a neighboring lagoon, put it into the canoe and paddled it up to Haley's Bend, where his residence is, and sank it in the river, meaning to await the subsidence of the great excitement that would be occasioned by the robbery and murder before availing himself of the fruit of his crime."

Seeing that Holton was to be used first as a witness for the defense, the proper oath was administered and Tom's counsel made ready to question him. So eager was he to confess, however, and so apprehensive of almost immediate death from a deep and painful wound in the shoulder, that he forestalled all questions.

"Yes, Judge! Lord ha' mercy on me, I'm him as done it! An' I've been shot to

death, an' 'ave got to die immediate, an' no chance to make my peace!

"I ain't got no 'ardness agin the man as shot me, Judge; I was gittin' away from 'im, an' he popped me in the back—Lord ha' mercy on me!

"I've done a many bad things, Judge. I've stole; I've smuggled; I've run hosses over the line. But nothin', s' help me Gawd, to ekal wot I done to George M'Garriger. He's hanted me cruel every night sence I killed him. I see 'im comin' in jest es 'e did wen I wus tryin' to open the safe, . . . an' I 'ave to kill 'im over again every night —leastwise I 'ave to strike, but oh, my Gawd, Judge, there's nothin' there to hit!"

And so the abject wretch wandered on, giving out the facts that were being sought for in snatches, and intermingling them with groans, and frantic appeals to the mercy of heaven, and shuddering references to the ever-present apparition of his victim.

It soon became clear to us all that, strong

and wicked as he was, Big Wilse was an arrant coward. He had been surprised and cornered while doing the work of a paltry thief, and, in a paroxysm of fear, had struck the murderous blow without premeditation.

The substance of Holton's story, separated from repeated outbursts expressive of pain, remorse and fear of death, was to the following effect.

He was a big man but a small villain until he was put on the track of George M'Garriger's wealth. Then he became a great criminal by mere accident.

Holton had a cousin in Detroit who was employed as salesman in a hardware store—the store, unfortunately, where old George bought his little safe. The salesman judged that a plain farmer-man like M'Garriger would not buy a safe unless he meant to keep a good deal of money in the house; and that he would be an easy man to rob. By careful inquiry he learned the name and residence of his customer. Then he communicated with his big cousin on the sub-

ject, proposing to put him on the track of a real good thing if he would "go halves." The evil compact was made, and Big Wilse was told of M'Garriger's safe and what might be found in it.

Being a wary scoundrel, Holton took plenty of time to mature his plans. The fear of Tom Brimmicom, whom he might chance to encounter in the undertaking, held the would-be robber in check, for a while; but his cousin's threat to put the job into other hands decided him to make the attempt.

What took place in carrying out the robbery—the surprise by old George, the fatal blow, the hurried bearing away of the yet locked safe — had been imagined and described by Debby Cramer with all the accuracy of an eye-witness.

Holton's great feat of strength was his undoing. He had flattered himself that it would be impossible to trail a canoe over miles of water; but he had not reckoned on the keen eyes and keener logic of our young

lady detective, which read aright the few tracks he left, and narrowed and concentrated the pursuit upon the one man, wherever he could be found, strong enough to carry that burden.

While paddling through the darkness over the ten-mile stretch between the lagoon and Haley's Bend Holton had ample time to consider his future movements. It would not do to draw attention to himself by disappearing at once during the first excitement that would surely follow the discovery of the murder. He would paddle up to the Bend and sink the safe in the river in front of his cabin, and leave it there for weeks, months if necessary, until all search for the murderer had been given up. Then he would fish it out and get away with it to some distant place where he could enjoy the fruit of his crimes in safety.

Holton's confession and deportment in court were tragic in the extreme, save in one particular; in that there was a grim and ghastly conceit that provoked a smile.

How the officers came to suspect him, and to be in waiting for him on the river bank when he went down at daybreak to feel for his treasure with a long pole that he might be sure it was still there, and how they knew just where to grapple for the safe, were questions that confounded him.

"I'm positive sure, Judge," said he, "it must a' been the old Devil 'imself as told 'em; fer there wus no one but 'im an' me as knew 'oo took that safe, an' w'ere it wus 'id. I s'pose 'e thought 'e 'ad 'is 'ook in my jaw fast enough, an' would just land me in 'ell while 'e 'ad the chance!"

The further proceedings in the case of The Queen vs. Thomas Brimmicom were short and satisfactory. The judge directed the jury to find a verdict of Not Guilty, which they did without leaving the box. Then came another scene. Tom was congratulated, first of all, by the Judge, who discharged him from the custody of the court with the assurance that not a shadow of a stain remained upon him. Whereupon

the whole body of spectators burst into applause, and it was not rebuked from the bench.

The greetings of us, his personal friends, were less boisterous. They were born of emotions that never get any expression but that of the strong hand-clasp, and the light in the eyes springing up out of a depth in the soul that cannot utter itself in words. Debby Cramer was radiant with a joy that did not need and could not have found a better exponent than her speaking face, rendered all the more eloquent by the happy tears that glistened in her eyes.

Of all the little band from The Forks Mary M'Garriger alone, found power to speak. After embracing Tom, and kissing him on both cheeks, she lifted up her voice, and said:

"A'm sayin' tae a'body in thes hoose, an' maist o' a' tae yirsel,' Tam, that wi' a' that's come an' gaen sin ' A' wes mad' a lane an' sorrowfu' wumman be that deed o' dairkness, ther hesna been a meenute when

A' thocht ye wes guilty. We didna ken, an' we dinna ken the noo, nor wull we ask tae ken till yir mindit o' yersel, tae tell us, wherefore ye gaed awa' that nicht; but the Lord he kens that we didna haud ye guilty o' onything that wud bring shame tae yirsel' or tae yir kin."

The night of Tom's acquittal, when we had all dined together at the hotel and were talking over the events of the day, I requested Andy and Horace Bristol to give an account of the arrest and the finding of the safe. Andy motioned to Bristol, and he told the story with evident relish.

"You see, when Andy and I went up the North Branch we had only that night and the next day and night to do our work in if we were to be ready to act on the morning of the trial. So we took grub enough in the canoe to last us through, and resolved to stick to our job.

"We landed a mile below Holton's place, on the opposite side of the river, and hid our craft in some bushes. Then we went

up to the Bend and began to spy on our man.

"There was nothing much to note until near dark. Holton came out and went in a good many times,—he seemed to be cleaning and oiling his rifle, as if he meant to go hunting the next day. But a little before dark he came down to the river with a long pike-pole, feeling for something under water. He appeared satisfied, and went back into his hut. We couldn't guess what he was feeling for; but made up our minds that if he went hunting in the morning we would go over and find out, and look his premises over generally.

"We didn't sleep any that night. The accommodations were poor, and, anyway, we wanted to be on the watch. At daybreak Holton came down the river again and felt in the water for whatever was there, and went back. In about an hour he came out equipped with powder-horn, bullet-pouch and rifle, and struck out northeast,—off for a day's hunting, as we had hoped.

"But we didn't hurry; best let him get a good way off, we thought. After two hours we went down to our canoe and paddled up to the bend, and landed in front of Holton's place. The first move was to find out what he had been feeling for on the bottom of the river. Andy took the pole and prodded until he struck something hard, but couldn't make out what it was. Then he got a little mad, and says to me, 'See here, I ain't goin' to be beat about this thing, blamed if I am! So he peeled off his clothes and plunged in and dove down to the spot. When he came up and got his breath again he says to me, 'Mr. Bristol, we needn't look any further! That's the safe down there, an' Wilse Holton's the cuss we're after! He's sunk it where nobody 'd think of lookin' for it, an' is waitin' till Tom Brimmicom's hung, an' things hes quieted down, to git away with it.'

"The next morning we started from The Forks ready for business—the warrant in order, two regular constables, and Andy, Dan Littleton and I sworn in as specials.

We took two double teams, and the canoe in one of the wagons, so as to be furnished all round. It was a full hour to daylight when we got up opposite Holton's place. We paddled over at once and hid ourselves behind some trees near the place where the safe was sunk.

"Just as we expected, Holton came down at daybreak and felt in the water for the safe. When he dropped the pole and turned to go back . . . there stood Andy in his path not more than ten feet away, with his big Colt revolver pointing straight for his head. 'Wilse,' says Andy, 'I've got the drop on ye! If ye stir I'll bore ye! Ye're wanted up to Sarnia to-day, Wilse, an' ye've got to come, alive if ye like, but dead if ye don't come quiet!'

"We looked for a fight, and were ready. But that big man carries nothing but the heart of a sheep under his vest. He stood an instant like one dazed, and then darted away up the river bank. Andy challenged him once more: 'Wilse, if ye don't stop

I'll shoot to kill!' Wilse kept right on. Then Andy fired once, and brought him down. Oh, how he rolled on the ground, and roared to God and man for mercy!

"There isn't much more to tell. We put the irons on him and then dressed his wound as well as we could. It was a pretty bad hole that Andy's bullet made, but we thought we could get him to Sarnia alive, and we did. Of course we fished up the safe and brought it with us. You know the rest."

This part of the story closes just here; and yet there are two events of later date that belong to it.

Wilse Holton did not hang. While under remand for surgical treatment his wound gangrened and he died—certainly remorseful, let us hope, penitent.

The safe was left in care of the Gore Bank until Tom Brimmicom returned to Sarnia with the key and power of attorney to make investments and deposits in the name of Mary M'Garriger.

CHAPTER X.

MATH AND AFTERMATH.

Mrs. Cramer was considered, with cause, the most refined and aristocratic lady of Sydenham Forks; also, the most beautiful, excepting, always, her daughter Debby.

It was not our way, however, to compare these two. They were so evidently alike in type that any distinction made could be only for the passing time. The mother was a full-blown rose; the daughter, an opening bud of the same stock. Mrs. Cramer was in the "golden, glad September" of womanly loveliness; Debby, in the June thereof.

Mrs. Cramer's ten years of widowhood had been passed in such manner of life that gossip had never been enriched with the slightest whisper that she entertained, even as a possibility, the thought of marrying a second time.

Happily, the short but perilous experience she had under the influence of Prof. Grisdale was known to but four persons—her daughter Debby, Tom Brimmicom, Dan Littleton and myself. And we who knew, so understood her state during that period that we felt nothing but pity, and would have yielded up our lives rather than give her secret to the criticism of the vulgar.

The self-styled professor had taken advantage of the personal contact allowed to a phrenologist in examining the head to establish a powerful hypnotic influence over Mrs. Cramer; his object being to secure for himself the wedded companionship of that lady, and the enjoyment of her large fortune. So complete had his control of her become that she received his visits, yielded dumbly to his will, and was found over-willing to dispose of Debby to Tom Brimmicom at the first asking—presumably with a view to clearing the way for her own union with the Professor.

We who were intimately acquainted with

Mrs. Cramer were shocked beyond measure when we came to know how far and how suddenly she had been wrenched from her ideals and principles of life. It seemed a case of demoniacal possession so thorough as to substitute in the victim the will of another and an evil personality.

Indeed, as I recall the matter at this writing, I think it probable that Mrs. Cramer never realized, neither at the time of it, nor afterwards, the frightful precipice toward which she was being urged, nor the power that was urging her. She was as one who had walked in her sleep over dangerous places, but had no recollection of the fact upon waking. If Grisdale had any place in her memory as a suitor for her hand it was as one of those shadowy people who belong to half-forgotten dreams.

Neither had Mrs. Cramer the slightest suspicion of how we had plotted, and wrought, and dared for her deliverance in kidnaping the wily Professor and scaring him into flight from our part of the globe.

Before there had been time to miss him his disappearance on the night of the murder of George M'Garriger had suggested the suspicion that he had been partner with Tom Brimmicom in that crime.

The shock of it all—the tragedy, and the apparent guilt of Grisdale and Tom—was the best mental and nervous alterative that Mrs. Cramer could have taken. It was severe; but it thoroughly waked her from the spell which had been upon her.

When Tom Brimmicom was honorably acquitted on the confession of Wilse Holton, and we all returned in triumph to The Forks, there was universal rejoicing. Every one received Tom with open arms—especially Mrs. Cramer. She seemed eager to make amends for her temporary doubt of his innocence; an offense which Tom, for various reasons, found it easy and desirable to condone.

Once more the world was bright for Tom and Debby; also, for Dan Littleton and Bell M'Garriger. Dan's perspicacity was again

exemplified in the measures he took to divert the minds of the sorrowing family from dwelling too constantly on the dark memories caused by Holton's crimes. He counseled them to offer Baldoon House for sale—they would not care to return to a place where they had been haunted, plundered and bereaved. He pointed out the impossibility of remaining always at Andy Harris's, kind-hearted as he was, and pleasant as it was to themselves to be in the old home. Now that they had regained possession of their ample fortune, why not build a comfortable house at The Forks?

Mary M'Garriger thought well of the suggestion; and in the business of the undertaking, and in planning the new house and its furnishings, she and her daughters found, not forgetfulness, but interesting occupation that saved them from growing morbid.

Meanwhile, what of Horace Bristol? Tom had found him in the East, well preserved and prosperous, and still living a bachelor for love of Deborah Dean, who, in her

young girlhood, had been constrained by parental authority to renounce her absent sailor lad and marry Andrew Cramer.

With rapidly varying emotions of surprise, pity, gladness, and anger, Bristol had listened to Tom's account of her long widowhood, and her peril through the machinations of Grisdale. Yes; he would go west with Tom and take a hand in breaking the Professor's power over her, and, if need were, in breaking the Professor himself, and then . . . and then . . . who could tell what might come to pass?

Then had come Debby's letter bringing the crushing news that George M'Garriger had been murdered the same night that Tom had stolen away on his secret mission; that he was suspected; and that a warrant of arrest was awaiting his return. All the same Bristol would go west with him, and see him through his trouble, and then . . . attend to some other things.

Desiring to avoid Mrs. Cramer until he had seen Tom through his little difficulty,

Bristol had announced himself at The Forks as Timothy Brown, and under that name had achieved a wide notoriety by his services in connection with the arrest of Wilse Holton.

When the time came that he was free to approach Mrs. Cramer, the questions of how to change back to his real name, and to begin properly the new siege he meant to lay to that lady's heart, assumed formidable proportions. Would not the name Bristol, and his presence at that particular time, suggest to her mind that there had been some sort of conspiracy to bring him there? And might not the fact of his having come with Tom on his return from that mysterious journey lay bare our whole plot and lead on to a demand that we should now account for Grisdale?

These problems were considered in secret session of all who were concerned in them —Debby Cramer, Dan Littleton, Tom, Bristol, and myself. Solutions would have come easier if there had been any doubts of

Mrs. Cramer's complete emancipation from hypnotic influence; but there was none. The Professor's power over her had vanished as completely as himself. The one object now to be attained was to open a hopeful way for Bristol to approach Mrs. Cramer—a way that would neither prejudice his prospect of success nor betray our conspiracy. At last Bristol cut all the knots at a single stroke.

"I'm going to cultivate Mrs. Cramer's acquaintance as Timothy Brown. She'll hardly recognize me if my right name don't suggest who I am. Since twenty-one years ago I've cleared off that bald place on the top of my head, and raised all this hair on my face, and added to my former self more than forty pounds of Horace Bristol that she has never seen. I'll go in as Timothy Brown. If I can win on my present merits without any help from bygones I'll come out as Horace Bristol. If I fail I'd rather do it as Timothy Brown."

We all approved of this program. That

same night Debby introduced Mr. Brown's name in a conversation with her mother and Tom, and she did it with all the sweet innocence of a dove. How good Mr. Brown had been to Tom in his trouble, and how brave! Was not he going to stay at The Forks for some time? He would be lonely. Surely they ought to show him some social attention. Wouldn't it be nice to have Tom bring him to call, and then invite him to tea?

Socrates himself could not have managed more adroitly than did that artful maiden to lead on to a desired conclusion by a series of invincible interrogations. Tom, of course, was a willing captive. But even the exclusive Mrs. Cramer—now her aristocratic self—surrendered, and became enthusiastic over the duty of ministering to the social comfort of the lonely Mr. Timothy Brown.

It chanced, the next morning, that Debby and her mother were walking toward the postoffice when Timothy Brown was passing in the other direction, on the opposite side of the street. Noticing that the

stranger lifted his hat, Mrs. Cramer asked, "Do you know that gentleman, Debby?" With an air of guileless indifference Debby answered, "Why, certainly, mother. I met him several times at Sarnia, during the trial, and traveled with him when we all came back to The Forks together. That's Mr. Bri—— I mean Mr. Brown. Don't you think he's nice looking?"

Mrs. Cramer murmured some soft response of assent, and thereafter was strangely silent during the remainder of their walk. If we had known all that was passing in her mind after that chance and distant view of Mr. Brown we should not have been quite so sure of our strategy.

The mysteries and surprises of the soul are many. Who can expound them? Without having identified at the moment the handsome man of middle age on the opposite side of the street, the mere effect of seeing him was to waken in Mrs. Cramer's mind memories of a past which had been both bitter and sweet. Before that walk to

and from the postoffice was finished she had lived over some years of her early life —why, she could not have told.

She breathed again the fragrance of the sea. She studied, romped, quarreled and made up—a hundred times over—with a bright-eyed, brown-haired, barefooted boy, her sometime schoolmate. She wandered with him in forest and on seashore, gathering wild flowers and shells. She rode again that thrilling short journey, pick-a-pack, on his sturdy back, when he carried her from the rock to the beach through the rising waters of the tide which had surprised and surrounded them.

And then she stood once more with him in their sacred trysting place under the great oak, and accepted his troth, and gave him hers—sealing it with the first kiss of her virgin lips—when he was about to sail away on that long voyage that was to put more than all the world between them.

As though the memories that came next were terrifying beyond endurance, her mind

fled through them as through a region haunted with frightful specters, and then lingered on that last meeting under the oak when she, another man's wife, and he, a strong man stricken and desperate, parted *forever*, in great bitterness of soul.

In the quietness of her own room Mrs. Cramer began to analyze the strangely reminiscent action of her mind that day, and to trace it to its beginning and cause. She was startled not a little when Mr. Timothy Brown stood revealed as the fountain-spring of it all! It was the sight of him that started her thoughts back into that bitter-sweet past!

And that raised the question, wherefore? She had passed no words with him—had not even heard the sound of his voice. Little by little the image of Mr. Brown, as she had seen him that morning, and something distinctive in his carriage when walking, came out in living clearness before her mental vision . . . and then she knew! Yes! The man who had power to quicken these long

suppressed memories of Horace Bristol must be Horace Bristol himself!

It is not likely that Mrs. Cramer was well enough furnished in psychical learning to add to the suggestions made by Mr. Brown's physical appearance the more potent telepathic influence of the thought-waves that were issuing with the might of a tempest from their center in Mr. Brown's brain, and breaking with silent but tremendous force upon her spiritual sensibilities. For the mind of Horace Bristol was fixed upon her with an intenseness that amounted to agony. For the first time in twenty-one years his eyes beheld her, and all the pent up, unsatisfied love of his strong nature went out to her. Is it any wonder that she felt the influence of it?

And thus, without being able to account fully for it, Mrs. Cramer came to know, in advance of his call as a stranger, that Horace Bristol was alive, was near, had passed her that morning with only the width of a street between, and that he was using a

name that was not his own. Why had he come to The Forks? Why did he call himself Timothy Brown? How was she to meet him that afternoon, when he would be presented by Tom Brimmicom as Mr. Brown?

Not being able to solve these questions, Mrs. Cramer determined to carefully conceal from every one—and from him most of all—her knowledge that Timothy Brown and Horace Bristol were one and the same person. She would receive him as a stranger under the name he chose to use, and await developments. If it should prove—this to her most secret soul—that he had come to renew his wooing under a false name, which would imply the hateful assumption that *she* had forgotten *him*, well . . . she would punish him, *a little*, as Timothy Brown, before granting him grace as Horace Bristol.

It will be seen from all this how completely our second plot had gone to pieces before we began to work it out. But we knew nothing of the psychological phenom-

enon that had taken place; and walked ignorantly into the snare we had prepared for a very different purpose than our own entrapment.

Tom Brimmicom's introduction of his friend was formal, even to courtliness, so anxious was he to carry on the deception successfully. "Mrs. Cramer," said he, "allow me to present Mr. Timothy Brown, who stood by me like a brother in my hour of need; Mr. Brown, Mrs. Cramer."

Such greetings as pass between well-bred persons when they are made known to each other followed. If there were inward perturbations they did not show on the surface; and that was, to me, the marvel of marvels.

For, in truth, the occasion drew upon the several parties to that interview to the uttermost of their powers of dissimulation. Tom and Debby and *Mr. Brown* must suppress all exhibition of their painful eagerness as to the result of their attempt to palm off an old-time friend and lover as a stranger. In addition to that trial *Mr.*

Brown found it necessary to grapple with and subdue a mad impulse, that seized him the moment he came into Mrs. Cramer's presence, to declare himself at once as Horace Bristol, and risk everything on the issues of the moment.

And who can describe adequately the battle for self-control fought and won by Mrs. Cramer? Supposed to feel nothing beyond the ordinary experiences incident to the introduction of a new acquaintance, she was, in reality, finding it all but impossible to stifle the cry of her heart when a nearer view redoubled her assurance that the man before her was, indeed, Horace—Horace of the dear old days whose memories were redolent of school and forest and seashore! Horace who had been the first to establish mastery over her virgin heart! Horace of the plighted troth which she had broken, and he had kept! But . . . she must not, would not, give voice to her heart. Was not he there as Timothy Brown? And how did she know that he had come on the busi-

ness of love? Very sternly she bade her heart be still, and wait.

It is not to be supposed that these swift mental activities, and the emotions caused by them, took any appreciable time out of the conversation which naturally followed the introduction. Both Mrs. Cramer and her caller were experienced people of the world and succeeded in concealing what they did not wish to reveal, and in keeping up the pretense of strangerhood, with admirable skill, and without any awkward pause.

"I'm delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Brown," said Mrs. Cramer after she had seated her guests. "My daughter and Mr. Brimmicom have told me how good you were to them in the late difficulty. It was fortunate for Tom that he met you, whatever else happened on that strange journey which he don't care to talk about. Do you make a long stay at The Forks?"

"That depends, Mrs. Cramer, on a matter or two that I have had in mind since I met

Mr. Brimmicom in the East. I learned from him that there are some fine timber limits in this region and, having some idle money to invest, came on to see them for myself. I don't mind saying to you who are here that if I find a proper opening, and Mr. Brimmicom will take a hand with me, I may locate at The Forks for some time." (Oh, *Mr. Brown!* How could you?) "If I do settle here I shall count it a great privilege to have the friendship of yourself and daughter. The fact is I have had the bad taste to live a bachelor to this hour, and have no kinsfolk of my own. As a consequence I am equally at home and equally lonely in every place."

Again, *Mr. Brown*, how could you? Not that he knew the effect his words were taking. He only meant, as Mr. Brown, the stranger, to give a reasonable account of his coming to The Forks. And it was not altogether untruthful; for he and Tom had actually talked of a possible partnership in the lumbering business.

But all the time Mrs. Cramer was listening, not to Mr. Brown the stranger, but to Horace Bristol; and her heart was aching for the twenty-one years of loneliness to which she had doomed him. Moreover, *Mr. Brown* would have been interested in knowing the tender but earnest protest of her heart against the statement that in living a bachelor to that hour he had displayed bad taste. She was glad, exceedingly, that he had done so; and knowing now, by a woman's unerring instinct, that she was still beloved, she began to taste by anticipation the exquisite joy of consoling him for all those loveless years.

In outward seeming the interview continued and ended with no feature unusual to such functions; but I venture to say that seldom, since human hearts began to beat and thrill, has there been, on such an occasion, a like mingling of surface comedy that might speak at will and heart-deep pathos that was sternly denied expression in any form. After I learned that we had deceived

ourselves instead of Mrs. Cramer I could not understand how they managed to get through that first half hour together without betraying the truth. Manage it they did, however, and Mr. Brown went away under the delusion, shared by Debby and Tom and myself, that he had deceived Mrs. Cramer.

Thereafter the acquaintance grew apace. Mr. Brown was a frequent guest in the Cramer home. Mrs. Cramer and Debby, escorted by Tom and Mr. Brown, made many pleasant excursions to the beautiful St. Clair, explored the Indian Reserve on Walpole Island, and even went as far afield as Detroit. And Mr. Brown negotiated the purchase of one of Mrs. Cramer's timber limits. When the price was fixed it was arranged that he should pay but a half, and that the other half interest should be conveyed to Tom as a part of Debby's portion at the time of their marriage; this, in view of the business partnership about to be established between Tom and Mr. Brown.

The intercourse grew more and more agreeable. Mrs. Cramer made no effort to disguise the pleasure she took in the society of *Mr. Brown*. He would have been dull, indeed, not to infer that in due time, with ordinary good management, his way to the lady's heart would be sufficiently open to justify an advance. There was only one feature of the situation that was less than pleasant to the wooer: his success as Mr. Brown would imply that he had been utterly forgotten as Horace Bristol. But then . . . one can't have everything; and to win the one lady of his heart on any terms would be, in his estimation, as near an approach to perfect blessedness as ordinary mortals ever make.

There came a day when Mr. Brown thought the time ripe for his advance.

He was no longer a hot-blooded youngster, and would move in this matter with calm deliberation. After careful forethought it appeared quite clear to him that a warm-hearted declaration of love—much as he felt

disposed to make it—would be out of place in the circumstances. They were both a little advanced in years—not to say old, oh, no—but past the enthusiasm of youth in matters of the heart. Mrs. Cramer might be persuaded to listen favorably to his suit; but was it at all likely that she could so far forget her early love for Horace Bristol and such affection as she had felt for Andrew Cramer as to kindle responsive to the ardent flame that burned in the heart of Mr. Brown? He thought not. Doubtless she would prefer to have him come forward in a cool, business-like way, befitting the time of life they had both reached.

This worthy gentleman, Mr. Brown for the time being, made a few mistakes in his lifetime; this was, probably, the gravest of them. A woman of wholesome mind who will entertain a proposal of marriage at all —no matter at what age—likes to be loved by the man proposing; and the more he loves her the better she likes it . . . and him.

Mr. Brown went to Mrs. Cramer prepared to put all necessary restraint upon the vehemence of his passion, and offer himself to her in a sober, sensible, middle-aged way,—the decorous phrases therefor being already arranged in his mind. By something in his manner, when she received him in the parlor, Mrs. Cramer knew that the day of fate had come and prepared her mind for it.

But Mr. Brown found his second advance upon that lady's heart about the hardest and most terrifying thing he had ever undertaken. His former battles with old ocean in its stormiest mood, with western bravos and savage Indians and Rocky Mountain grizzlies, were not so dreadful. And his first wooing of her had been a case of sweet, simple, almost unconscious drift—two souls graduating into manhood and womanhood hand in hand, and each accepting the other as the complement of itself. But now he came as an acquaintance of yesterday to contend for the coveted possession with two

rivals—Andrew Cramer the buried husband, and his own younger, comelier, unrecognized self who had been well beloved under another name.

And so Mr. Brown spoke of many other things before he found courage to begin his real errand. The weather did service, of course; then, the new partnership between himself and Tom; then, Debby's marriage with Tom, which was to take place in a few months. At that last point, sailor-like, he got his bearings and laid a straight course for port.

"You'll be very lonely after Debby leaves you, Mrs. Cramer."

"Yes, I suppose I shall. It might be worse, though. Tom's going into business with you, and they'll live here at The Forks, where I can see her every day. Tom's so good about everything, too. He would be willing to share expenses and live with me. But Debby has notions of her own about family life. She holds that every married woman should be the sole mistress

of a home. I must say I agree with her, much as I shall feel being parted from her by our living in separate houses."

"She's right, Mrs. Cramer. But all the same, for a good while you'll feel that this is a desolate house when you can't speak to her at will, nor she to you; when you can't hear her singing about the house nor catch the sound of her feet. And what will you do when you come to put in your evenings alone? I'm afraid you'll be very unhappy."

"Oh, Mr. Brown! You almost break my heart beforehand! I know it's going to be hard. We've never been apart a whole day except the time she went to Sarnia to attend Tom's trial. Well, if it gets past endurance I know they'll give me a corner in their own home. I'll just sell this property, and give up to be an old woman living with her children."

"Mrs. Cramer! You an old woman! Why, you've scarcely reached prime. With your splendid health, and beauty as fresh as that of a girl, I'm sure the best half of your

life is before you. Forgive me if I've said depressing things. You don't know how much I've suffered from loneliness all my life, nor how it makes me pity any one threatened with it. Do you know, I once set up housekeeping—as a bachelor, of course—to escape the utter weariness of life in boarding-houses and hotels, where I belonged to nobody and nobody belonged to me, and nothing that I used was my own. I stood it three weeks. Then I sold everything off for what I could get and went into lodgings again. I could have endured the days; but the deadly silence of the evenings and the nights, with never the sound of a voice or even of a footfall in the place, was too much for me. I suppose the memory of it made me speak as I did."

Just then Mrs. Cramer's dainty lace handkerchief went swiftly to her eyes; but poor Mr. Brown had no means of knowing that the tears she dried, almost fiercely, were not at all in self-pity, but altogether for the man whose life she had desolated. Pres-

ently she resumed and, either by hap, or intentionally, removed the last barrier out of the way of Mr. Brown's approach by saying:

"With your strong social instincts it's a wonder you haven't married and made a home for yourself long ago."

"Mrs. Cramer, I don't care to tell—even to you—the reason why I've remained single. But I do want you to understand that I'm not a man with a past that he's ashamed of. There isn't a woman in God's universe, living or dead, who can say that I've been less than honorable in my treatment of her, or less than true to any least promise I ever made. And now, let me tell you why I came here to-day. You are, or soon will be, alone. I am, as I have been all my life, alone. I can say truly, and I do say, that I esteem you above all other women I have known. There is no serious difference of age or fortune to stand in the way. I realize deeply that in securing a lady of your refinement and personal charms

for my wife the advantages will all be on my side. As a partial offset, however, I dare to say that you are the only woman in all the world whom I have loved and to whom I have proposed marriage. If you accept me I can give you a virgin heart; and that is something in a man of my years. I anticipate the objection that our acquaintance has been short. That is true; but we are no longer in extreme youth. At our time of life we ought to be able to judge of one another safely on the acquaintance we have had. What will you say to me, Mrs. Cramer? Will you consent to walk the remainder of life's way by my side, as Mrs. Brown?"

With what composure she could command out of a perfect riot of joy and amusement Mrs. Cramer made answer:

"I will not pretend that your proposal has surprised me. I have seen it coming for some time. And I don't mind saying to you that I have enjoyed your society quite as much as you have seemed to enjoy mine,

and would continue to find pleasure in it. But . . . there are reasons . . . why I cannot become Mrs. Brown. Since I must inflict what I hope will be only the temporary pain of a refusal, I feel that some explanation is your due. If ever, in the ten years of my widowhood, my thoughts have dwelt on the possibility of a second marriage they have always turned, like the needle to the pole, to a man I knew and dearly loved in my girlhood. I was plighted to him, and broke my troth under constraint of my parents. If he is dead . . . or is married to some other woman . . . or cannot forgive the wrong I did to him and myself . . . then I will walk alone to the end of life. Mr. Brown, it is written, and the decree will not be altered, that if ever I marry again it will be with Horace Bristol. That is why I cannot become Mrs. Brown."

From that moment Timothy Brown was no more. He had been nothing but a name anyway; and the man who had borrowed him, for a purpose that he had

not served very well, repudiated him on the spot.

"Mrs. Cramer! Debby Dean! Look into my eyes and see if you can't find Horace Bristol there! Debby, he isn't dead, nor married, nor unforgiving! He's here at your feet, with a greater love for you than ever! Do you doubt that I am he? See! (drawing from a place next his heart a golden locket) there you are as you used to be in the dear old days, and there, as near to my heart as I could get you, you have been every day since we parted. Tell me that I am Horace Bristol to you!"

But before Horace got well through that "sober, sensible, middle-aged" rhapsody Mrs. Cramer was in his arms, convulsed with sobs and laughter, and all was well. A little later she replied in words:

"Yes, yes, dear! There, there, there, that will do! Yes, you are Horace Bristol to me, and have been since the day you lifted your hat to me and Debby on the street.

"How did I know? That's beyond me. Debby said, when you saluted us across the street, 'That's Mr. Brown'; but there was something about you that filled my mind with thoughts and memories of Horace Bristol, and before you came to call in the afternoon I knew you."

I think this story has been carried to a stage from which it may be safely entrusted to the reader's imagination.

Great amusement may be derived from working out the many taradiddles we had to invent in order to keep from Mrs. Cramer and the public the real reason of Mr. Bristol's appearance on the scene, and why he masqueraded, at first, as Mr. Brown.

The three interesting couples on the way to Eden made good their entrance in the following order:—Tom and Debby, first; then, Horace Bristol and Mrs. Cramer; then, after a year of mourning for Bell's father, Dan Littleton and Bell M'Garriger.

Which, think you, afforded the richer experience of life,—the math of the younger people, or the aftermath of Horace Bristol and Mrs. Cramer?

